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THE

CHRISTIAN

IN

COMPLETE ARMOUR.

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THE

CHRISTIAN
IN COMPLETE ARMOUR,

OR, A TREATISE ON

THE SAINTS WAR WITH THE DEVIL;

WHEREIN

A DISCOVERY IS MADE

OF THE POLICY, POWER, WICKEDNESS, AND STRATAGEMS MADE USE OF BY THAT

ENEMY OF GOD AND HIS PEOPLE.

A MAGAZINE OPENED,

FROM WHENCE

THE CHRISTIAN IS FURNISHED

With Spiritual Arms for the Battle, assisted in buckling on his Armour, and taught the Use of his Weapons,

TOGETHER WITH

THE HAPPY ISSUE OF THE WHOLE WAR.

By WILLIAM GURNALL, A. M.

FORMERLY PASTOR OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, LAVENHAM, SUFFOLK.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.—VOL. III.

EIGHTH EDITION, REVISED AND CORRECTED, WITH A RECOMMENDATORY PREFACE,

By the Rev. W. F. PLATT,

HOLYWELL MOUNT CHAPEL, SHOREDITCH.

London:
PRINTED FOR L. J. HIGHAM, No. 6, CHISWELL-STREET, FINSBURY-SQUARE.
1804.

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THE

CHRISTIAN

IN

COMPLETE ARMOUR.

VERSE XV.

And your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace.

THIS verse presents us with the third piece of *Armour* in the Christian's panoply. A *spiritual shoe*, fitted to his foot, and to be worn by him, so long as he keeps the field against sin and Satan. *And your feet shod*, &c. We shall cast the words into distinct questions or enquiries, from the resolution of which, will result the several points to be insisted on.

First, What is meant by the *Gospel?*

Secondly, What by *Peace*, and why attributed to the *Gospel?*

Thirdly, What the feet here mentioned import, and what grace is intended by the *preparation of the Gospel of Peace*, which here is compared to the shoe, and fitted for these feet?

Quest. What is meant by the *Gospel?*

Answ. Gospel, according to the notation of the original word, signifies any good news, or joyful message; so *Jer.* xx, 15. *Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, a man-child is born to thee, to make him glad:* But

usually in scripture, it is restrained by way of excellency, to signify the doctrine of *Christ*, and salvation by him to poor sinners. *I bring you glad tidings*, saith the *Angel* to the shepherds, *of great joy*, Luke ii. 10. and *ver.* 11, he addeth, *Unto you is born a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.* Thus it is taken in this place, and generally in the New Testament, and affords this note.

CHAP. I.

Wherein the glad news that the Gospel brings, is declared from five Particulars, requisite to fill up the joyfulness of a message; with a word to stir up our bowels in pitying those that never heard any of this News.

Note. THE revelation of Christ, and the grace of God through him, is the best news and most joyful tidings that poor sinners can hear. It is such a message, as no good news can come before it, nor no ill news follow. No good news can come before it; no, not from God himself to the creature; he cannot issue out any blessing to poor sinners, till he hath shewn mercy to their souls in Christ. *God be merciful to us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us*, Psalm lxvii. 1.

First, God forgives, then he gives; till he be merciful to pardon our sins through Christ, he cannot bless, or look kindly on us sinners. All our enjoyments are but blessings in bullion, till gospel-grace, pardoning mercy, stamp and make them current; God cannot so much as bear any good will to us, till Christ makes peace for us; *on earth peace, good will to men*, Luke ii. 14. And what joy can a sinner take, though it were to hear of a kingdom befallen to him, if he may not have it with God's good will.

Again, No ill news can come after the glad tidings of the gospel, where believingly embraced, God's mercy in Christ,

Christ, alters the very property of all evils to the believer. All plagues and judgments that can befal the creature in the world, when baptized in the stream of gospel-grace, receives a new name, come on a new errand, and have a new taste on the believer's palate; as the same water by running through some mine, gets a tang and a healing virtue, which before it had not, *Isa.* xxxii. 24. *The inhabitant shall not say I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be pardoned their iniquity.* Observe, he doth not say, *they shall not be sick;* gospel-grace doth not exempt from afflictions; but, *they shall not say I am sick.* They shall be so ravished with the joy of God's pardoning mercy, that they shall not complain of being sick; this, or any other cross is too thin a veil to darken the joy of the good news. This is so joyful a message which the gospel brings, that God would not have *Adam* long without it, but opened a crevis to let some beams of this light, that is pleasant to behold, into his soul, amazed with the terrors of God's presence, without which as he was turned out of Paradise, so had he been turned into Hell immediately, for such the world would have been to his guilty conscience. This is the news God used to tell his people of, on a design to comfort them and cheer them, when things went worse with them, and their affairs were at the lowest ebb, *Isa.* vii. 14. *Micah* v. 5. This is the great secret which God whispers by his spirit in the ear of those only he embraces with his special distinguishing love, *Luke* x. 21. 1 *Cor.* ii. 12. so that it is made the sad sign of a soul marked out for hell, to have the *Gospel hid from it*, 2 Cor. iv. 3. To wind up this in a few words, there meet all the properties of a joyful message in the glad-tidings of the gospel. *Five* ingredients are desirable in a message, yea must all conspire to fill up the joyfulness thereof into a redundancy.

First, *It must be good;* none rejoice to hear evil news: Joy is the dilatation of the heart, whereby it goes forth to meet and welcome in what it desires; and this must needs be some good. Ill news is sure to find the heart shut against it, and to come before it is welcome.

Secondly, *It must be some great good,* or else it affects little; affections are stirred according to the degrees of good or evil in the object presented: A thing we hear may be so inconsiderable, that it is no great odds how it goes; but if it

be good, and that great also, of weighty importance, this causeth proportionable. The greater the bell, the more strength is required to raise it. It must be a great good that raiseth great joy.

Thirdly, *This great good must immediately concern them that hear it;* my meaning is, they must have propriety in it; for though we can rejoice to hear of some great good befallen another; yet it affects most, when it is emptied into our own bosom. A sick man doth not feel the joy of another's recovery with the same advantage as he would do his own,

Fourthly, *It would much add to the joyfulness of the news, if this were* inauditum *or* insperatum, *unheard of, unlooked for;* when the tidings steal upon us by way of surprize.—The further our own ignorance or despair have set us off all thoughts of so great enjoyment, the more joy it brings with it, when we hear the news of it. The joy of a poor swineherd's son, who never dreamed of a crown, would be greater at the news of such a thing conferred on him, than he whose birth invited him to look for it, yea promised it him as his inheritance; such an one his heart would stand but level to the place, and therefore could not be so ravished with it as another who lay so far below such a preferment.

Lastly, To fill up the joy of all these, *It is necessary that the news be true and certain*, or else all the joy soon leaks out. What great joy would it afford to hear of a kingdom befallen to a man, and the next day or month, to hear all crossed again and prove false? Now in the glad tidings of the gospel, all these do most happily meet together, to wind up the joy of the believing soul to the highest pin that the strings of his affections can possibly bear.

First, The news which the gospel hath in its mouth to tell us poor sinners, is good. It speaks promises, and they are significations of some good intended by God for poor sinners. The law, that brings ill news to town, threatenings are the *lingua mernacula legis,* it can speak no other language to sinners, but denunciations of evil to come upon them; but the gospel smiles on poor sinners, and planes the wrinkles that sit on the law's brow by proclaiming promises.

Secondly, The news the gospel brings is as great as good. It was that the *Angel* said, *Luke* ii. 10. *I bring you tidings of*

of great joy; great joy it must needs be, because it is all joy. The Lord Christ brings such news in his gospel, as that he hath left nothing for any after him to add to it; if there be any good wanting in the tidings of the gospel, we find it elsewhere than in God; for in the Covenant of the gospel, he gives himself through Christ to the believing soul; surely the *Apostle*'s argument will hold, *All things are yours, ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's*, 1 Cor. iii. 22. The gospel lays our pipes close to the fountain of goodness itself, and he sure must have all that is united to him that hath that is all. Can any good news come to the glorified Saints which Heaven doth not afford them? In the gospel we have news of that glory. *Jesus Christ hath brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel*, 2 Tim. i. 10. The sun in the firmament discovers only the lower world; it hides Heaven from us, while it shews the earth to us; but the gospel enlightens both at once. *Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come*, 1 Tim. iv. 8

Thirdly, The gospel doth not tell us news we are little concerned in; not what God hath done for Angels, but for us; *unto you* (saith the Angel, *is born a Saviour, Christ the Lord*: If charity made Angels rejoice for our happiness, surely then the benefit which is paid into our nature by it, gives a further pleasure to our joy at the hearing of it. It were strange that the messenger who only brings the news of some great empire to be devolved on a person, should sing, and the Prince to whom it falls, should not be glad. And, as the gospel's glad-tidings belong to man's nature, not to Angels; so in particular, to the poor soul, whoever thou art, that embraceth Christ in the arms of thy faith. A Prince is a common good to all his kingdom; every subject, though never so mean, hath a part in him, and so is Christ to all believers. The promises are so laid, that like a well-drawn picture, they look on all, that look on them by an eye of faith. The gospel's joy is thy joy, that hath but faith to receive it.

Fourthly, The glad-tidings of the gospel were unheard of, unlooked for by the sons of men; such news it brings, as never could have entered into the heart of man to conceive, till God unlocked the cabinet of his own good pleasure, and revealed the council of his will, wherein this mysterious price

price of love to fallen man, lay hid far enough from the prying eye of the most quick-sighted angel in Heaven, much more from man himself, who could read in his own guilty conscience within, and spell from the covenant without, now broken by him, nothing but his certain doom and damnation. So that the first gospel-sermon preached by God himself to *Adam*, anticipated all thoughts of such a thing intended by him. O who can conceive, but one that hath really felt the terrors of an approaching Hell in his despairing soul, how joyous the tidings of gospel-mercy is to a poor soul, dwelling amidst the black thoughts of despair, and bordering on the very marches of the region of utter darkness? Story tells us of a nobleman in King *Henry* the eighth's reign, to whom a pardon was sent a few hours before he should have been beheaded, which, being not at all expected by him, did so transport him, that he died for joy. And if the vessel of our nature be so weakly hooped, that the wine of such an inferior joy breaks it; how then could it possibly be able to bear the full joy of the gospel-tidings, which doth as far exceed this, as the mercy of God doth the mercy of a mortal man; and as the deliverance from an eternal death in Hell, doth a deliverance from a temporary death, which is gone before the pain can well be felt.

Fifthly, and lastly, The glad tidings of the gospel are certainly true. It is no flying report, cried up to day, and like to be crossed to-morrow; not news that is in every one's mouth, but none can tell whence it came, and who the author of it, we have it from a good hand, *God* himself, *to whom it is impossible to lie*, he from Heaven voucheth it, *This is my beloved Son, hear him*, Luke ix. What were all those miracles which Christ wrought, but ratifications of the truth of the gospel? Those wretches that denied the truth of Christ's doctrine, were forced many times to acknowledge the divinity of his miracles; which is a pretty piece of nonsense, and declares the absurdity of their unbelief to all the world. The miracles were to the gospel, as seals to a writing. They could not deny God to be in the miracles, and yet they could not see him in the doctrine, as if God would set his seal to an untruth. Here (Christians) is that which fills up the joy of this good news the gospel brings; that we may lay our lives upon the truth of it,

it, it will never deceive any that lay the weight of their confidence on it. *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners,* 1 Tim. i. 15. This bridge, which the gospel lays over the gulf of God's wrath, for poor sinners to pass from their sins into the favour of God here, and kingdom of God hereafter, is supported with no other arches than the wisdom, power, mercy, and faithfulness of God; so that the believing soul need not fear, till it sees these bow or break. It is called the *everlasting gospel,* Rev. xiv. 16. When Heaven and earth go to wreck, not the least iota of any promise of the gospel shall be buried in their ruins. *The word of the Lord endureth for ever, and this is the word, which by the Gospel is preached to you,* 1 Pet. i. 25.

Use 1. Pity those that never heard a word of this good news: Such there are in the world, whole nations, with whom the day is not yet broke, but a dismal night of ignorance and barbarism continues to be stretched over them; whose forlorn souls are under a continual massacre from the bloody butcher of Hell; an easy conquest (God knows) that foul fiend makes of them; who lays his cruel knife to their throats, and meets with no resistance; because he finds them fast asleep in ignorance, utterly destitute of that light which can alone discover a way to escape the hands of this destroyer. What heart that ever tasted the sweetness of the gospel-grace, trembles not at their deplorable state? yea, doth not stand astonished at the difference of God's dispensations to them and us? *Lord, why wilt thou manifest thyself to us, and not to the world?* God pardon the unmercifulness of our hearts, that we can weep no more over them. Truly we do not live so far from the *Moors* and *Indians,* but we may, by not pitying of them, praying for them, and earnest desiring their conversion, besmear ourselves with the guilt of their souls blood, which is shed continually by the destroyers of mankind. O how seldom is their miserable condition the companion of our sorrowful thoughts? and their conversion the subject of our prayers and desires? There have been, alas! in the world, more counsels how to ease them of their gold, than enrich them with the treasure of the gospel: How to get their land, than how to save their souls. But the time is coming, when winning souls will be found more honourable than conquering nations

tions. Well Christian, though thou canst not impart to them what God hath laid on thy trencher; yet as thou sittest at the feast of the gospel, think of those poor souls, and that compassionately, who starve to death for want of that bread with which thou art fed unto eternal life. There is an opinion which some have lately taken up, that the Heathens may spell Christ out of the sun, moon and stars; these may seem kinder than others have been to them; but I wish it doth not make them more cruel to them in the end. I mean by not praying so heartily for gospel-light to arise among them, as those must needs do, who believe them under a sad necessity of perishing without it; when a garrison is judged pretty well stored with provision for its defence, it is an occasion, that relief and succour comes the slower to it. And I wish Satan had not such a design against those poor forlorn souls in this principle; if such a lesson were to be got by the stars, we should before this have heard of some that had learned it. Indeed, I find a star led the wise men to Christ; but they had a heavenly preacher to open the text to them, or else they would never have understood it.

CHAP II.

A Lamentation for the unkind Welcome that Gospel News finds in the World; with two or three sad grounds of fear as to us in this Nation, taken from the present Entertainment the Gospel hath among us, with a double Exhortation to the Saints to rejoice in this joyous Message.

SECT. I.

Use 2. A SAD lamentation may be here taken up, that so good news should have such ill welcome, as the gospel commonly

monly finds in the world. When the tidings was first told at *Jerusalem*, of a Saviour being born, one would have thought, especially if we consider that the Scripture reckoning was now out, for the birth of the *Messias*, and they big with expectation of his coming, that all hearts should have leaped within them for joy at the news, to see their hopes so happily delivered and accomplished; but behold the clean contrary. Christ's coming proves matter of trouble and distaste to them; they take the alarm at his birth, as if an enemy, a destroyer, not a Saviour, were landed in their coast, and as such, *Herod* goes against him, and makes him flee the country. But possibly, though at present they stumble at the meanness of his birth and parentage; yet when the rays of his divinity shall shine through his miracles, then they will religiously worship him, whom now they contemn; when he comes forth into his public ministry, opens his commission, and shews his authority; yea, with his own blessed lips tells the joyful message he brings from his father unto the sons of men, then surely they will dearly love his person, and thankfully embrace, yea, greedily drink in the glad tidings of salvation which he preached to them: No, they persist in their cursed unbelief, and obstinate rejecting of him; though the Scripture, (which they seem to adore) bear so full a testimony for Christ, that it accuseth them to their own consciencies, yet they will have none of him. Christ tells them so much, *John* v. 39, 40. *Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me; and ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life*; life they desired, yet will lose it rather than come to him for it. And is the world now amended? doth Christ in his gospel meet with any kinder usage at the hands of most? The note that Christ sings is still the same, *Come unto me that ye may have life.* The worst hurt Christ does poor souls that come unto him, is to put them into a state of life and salvation; and yet where is the person that likes the offer? O 'tis other news that men generally listen after; this makes the exchange, the market-place so full, and the church so thin and empty. Most expect to hear their best news from the world; they look upon the news of the gospel as foreign, and that which doth not so much concern them (at least at present) it is time enough to mind this, when they are going into another

world. Alas! the gospel is not accommodated to their carnal desires, it tells them of no fields and vineyards it hath to give, it invites them not with the gaities of worldly honours and pleasures; had Christ in his gospel but gratified the cravings of men's lusts with a few promises for these things, though he had promised less for another world, the news would have gone down better with these sots, who had rather hear one prophesy of wine and strong drink, than preach of Heaven itself. Truly, they are but a very few, and those sufficiently jeered for their pains, that like the message of the gospel so well, as to receive it cordially into their hearts; if any one does but give entertainment to Christ, and it be known, what an alarm does it give to all his carnal neighbours? who, if they do not presently beset his house, as the *Sodomites* did *Lot*'s, yet set some brand of scorn upon him; yea, make account they have now reason enough to despise and hate him, how well soever they loved him before. O what will God do with this degenerate age we live in? O *England, England,* I fear some sad judgment or other bodes thee! If such glad-tidings as the gospel brings be rejected, sad news cannot be far off, I cannot think of less than of a departing gospel. God never made such a settlement of his gospel among any people, but he could remove it from them. He comes but upon liking, and will he stay where he is not welcome? Who will, that hath elsewhere to go? It is high time for the merchant to pack up and be gone, when few or none will buy; nay, when instead of buying, they will not suffer him to be quiet in his shop, but throw stones at him, and dirt on his richest commodities. Do we not see the names of Christ's faithful messengers bleeding at this day under the reproaches that fly so thick about their ears? Are not the most precious truths of the gospel almost covered with the mire and dirt of errors and blasphemies, which men of corrupt mind, set on work by the Devil himself, have raked out of every filthy puddle and sink of old heretics, and thrown on the face of Christ and his gospel! and where is the hand so kind, as to wipe off that which they throw on? The heart so valiant for the truth, that will stop these foul mouths, from spitting their venom against Christ and his gospel? If any thing be done of this kind, alas, 'tis so faintly, that they gather heart by it; justice is so favourably sprinkled, like a few drops upon a fire, that it rather encreaseth the flame of their rage against the

the truth than quench it. A prince calls not home his ambassador for an affront that is offered to him in the streets; but when he is affronted, and can have no redress for the wrong.

SECT. II.

Object. But some may say, though it cannot be denied that the gospel hath found very unkind entertainment by many among us, and especially of late years, since a spirit of error hath so sadly prevailed in the land; yet make us not worse than we are. There is, blessed be God, a remnant of gracious souls yet to be found, to whom Christ is precious; who gladly embrace the message of the gospel, and weep in secret for the contempt that is cast upon it by men of corrupt minds, and profane hearts; and therefore we hope we are not in such imminent danger of losing the gospel as your fears suggest.

Answ. If there were not such a sprinkling of Saints among us, our case were indeed desperate. The shades of that dismal night would quickly be upon us: these are they that have held the gospel thus long among us. Christ had, as to his gospel presence, been gone before this, had not these hung about his legs, and with their strong cries and prayers entreated his stay. But there are a few considerations, which seriously weighed, will not leave us without some tremblings of heart.

First, Consider what little proportion, as to the number, do these that embrace the gospel bear with those that continue to reject it; those that desire to keep Christ among us, and those that wish him gone, and would gladly be rid of him. Were it put to the vote, would not they carry it by thousands of thousands, that care not whether we have a gospel or not? And doth it not prophesy sadly, when the odds is so great? In all the departures of God from a people, there were ever some holy ones mingled among the rout of sinners. *Sardis* had her *few names which had not defiled their garments;* but yet the *candlestick was removed.* All that they could get was a promise for themselves in particular, *Rev.* iii. 4. *They shall walk with me in white;* but no protection for the church. God can pull down the house, and provide well for his Saints also that he finds there.—

A few voices are easily drowned in the out-cry of a multitude; a few pints of wine are hardly tasted in a tun of water: And a little number of Saints can do sometimes but little to the saving of a wretched people among whom they live; possibly as in a weak body, where the disease hath got the mastery, nature putting forth its *summum conatum*, its utmost strength, may keep life a-while in the body some days or weeks, but cannot long without some help to evacuate the distemper; so a few Saints, shut up in a degenerate age amongst an ungodly Christ-despising people, may a-while prorogue the judgment, and reprieve awhile the life of such a people; but if there be no change made upon them for the better, ruin must needs break in upon them.

Secondly, Consider of these few gracious ones found amongst us that embrace the gospel; how many are new converts, such I mean as the gospel hath of late days won to Christ? I am afraid you will find this little number of Saints chiefly to consist of old disciples, such as were wrought upon many years since. Alas, the womb of the gospel hath been in a great measure shut up of late, as to the bringing forth of souls by a thorough solid work of conversion. Indeed, if they may pass for converts, that baptize themselves into a new way and form of worship; or that begin their religion with a tenet and an opinion; we have more than a good many to shew of these; but in this old age of *England*'s withered profession, how great a rarity is a sincere convert? We cannot deny but God is graciously pleased to bring the pangs of the new birth now and then upon some poor souls in our assemblies (that his despised servants may have his seal to confirm their Ministry, and stop those mouths which are so scornfully opened against it); yet alas! it is but here and there one; and doth not this prophesy sadly to this nation? I am sure, when we see a tree that used to stand thick with fruit, now bring forth but little, may be an apple on this bough, and another on that, we look upon it as a dying tree. *Leah* comforted herself from her fruitfulness, *That therefore her husband would love her, and cleave to her*, Gen. xxix. 34. May we not on the contrary fear, that God will not love, but leave a people when they grow barren under the means of grace? God threatens as much, *Jer.* vi. 8. *Be instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee*; and if God's soul departs, then he is upon his remove, as to

his

his visible presence also; so indeed it follows, *Lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.* O my brethren, those golden days of the gospel are over, when converts came flying as a cloud, as the doves to their windows in flocks. Now gospel-news grow stale, few are taken with it. Though a kingdom hath much treasure and riches in it; yet if trade cease, no new bullion comes in, nor merchandize be imported; it spends upon its old stock, and must needs in time decay; our old store of Saints (the treasure of their times) wears away a-pace: What will become of us if no new ones come in their room? Alas! when our burials are more than our births, we must needs be on the losing hand. There is a sad list of holy names taken away from us; but where are they which are born to God? If the good go, and those which are left continue bad, yea, become worse and worse, we have reason to fear that God is clearing the ground, and making way for a judgment.

Thirdly, Consider the unhappy contentions and divisions that are found among the people of God; these prophesy sadly the Lord knows. Contentions ever portended ill. The remarkable departures of God, recorded in Scripture, from the church of the *Jews*, found them wofully divided and crumbled into parties. And the *Asiatic* churches no less. Christ sets up the light of his gospel to walk and work by, not to fight and wrangle; and therefore it were no wonder at all, if he should put it out, and so end the dispute. If these storms, which have been of late years upon us, and are not yet off, had but made Christians, as that did the disciples, *Mark* vi. 48. ply thy oar, and lovingly row all one way, it had been happy; we might then have expected Christ to come walking towards us in mercy, and help us safe to land; but when we throw away the oar, and fall a scuffling in the ship, while the wind continues loud about us; truly we are more like to drive Christ from us, than invite him to us; we are in a more probable way of sinking, than saving of the ship and ourselves in it.

SECT. III.

Use 3. A word of exhortation, and first to you who yet have not closed with the terms of the gospel, be persuaded to

to receive the message of the gospel kindly, believingly into your hearts; it is the best news you can send back to Heaven, as a gratulatory return for the glad tidings that the gospel brings from thence. Thy embracing Christ, preached to thee in the gospel, will be as welcome news to Heaven, I can tell thee, as the tidings of Christ, and salvation through him, can be to thee, *There is joy in Heaven at the conversion of a sinner.* Those *Angels* which sang Christ into the world, will not want a song when he is received into thy heart, for he came into the world for this end. Christ descended when he came into the world, but now he ascends: That was an act of his humiliation, this of exaltation. The highest created throne that God can sit in, is the soul of a beliéver; no wonder then, that Christ calls all his friends to joy with him at a soul's return to him and reception of him, *Luke* xv. 9. What joy is now in Heaven upon this occasion, we may collect from the joy it drew from Christ when on earth. It was some great good news that could wring a smile then from Christ, or tune his spirit into a joyful note, who was a man of sorrows; yet when his disciples, whom he had sent forth to preach the gospel, returned with news of some victorious success of their labours, *in that hour Jesus rejoiced in Spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father,* Luke x. 21. of all the hours of his life, that is the hour wherein Christ would express his joy; which, with the care of the spirit to record this passage in the history of Christ's life, shews, that Christ had an especial design in that expression of his joy at that time, and what could it be, but to let us know how much his heart was set upon the work of saving souls? and that when he should be gone to Heaven, if we meant to send any joyful news to him thither, it should be of the prosperous and victorious success the gospel hath over our hearts. This, which could make him rejoice in the midst of his sorrows here on earth, must needs be more joyous to him in Heaven, now where he hath no bitterness from his own sufferings, which are all healed, past, and gone, to mingle with the joy of this news; and if the kind reception of the gospel be such joyful news to him, you may easily conceive how distasteful the rejecting of it is. As he rejoiced in spirit to hear the gospel prevailed, so he cannot but be angry, when it meets with a repulse from the unbelieving world, *Luke* xiv. 21. we find the master of the house (that is Christ)

Christ) angry, when his servants sent to invite his guests (that is, preach the gospel), return with a denial from those that were bidden, for so their mannerly excuses were interpreted by Christ; yea so angry, that he claps a fearful doom upon them; *not one of those invited shall taste of my supper.* God can least bear any contempt cast upon his grace. The *Jews*, though they had many grievous calamities befel them for their idolatrous and other sins, yet never any like that, which their rejecting Christ brought upon them; under those they relented, but under this they hardened. They would not come when the supper was on the table; and therefore the cloth is drawn, and they go supperless to bed, and die in their sins; while they shut the door of their hearts against Christ, this padlock, as I may so call it, of judiciary impenitence is fastened to it. Christ needs take no other revenge on a soul for its refusing him, to make it miserable to the height, than to condemn such an one to have its own desire: Christ thou wilt not, Christ therefore thou shalt not have. O unhappy soul! thou that hast offers of Christ, but diest without Christ. Thou goest with thy full lading to damnation; none sink so deep in Hell as those that fall into it, with a stumble at Christ. That gospel which brings now good news, will, when thou shalt have a repetition-sermon of it at the great day, bring the heaviest tidings with it that ever thy ears heard.

SECT. IV.

Secondly, To you who have entertained the message of the gospel.

First, Rejoice at the news; glad tidings, and sad hearts, do not well together: when we see one heavy and sorrowful, we ask him what ill news he hath heard. Christian, what ill news hath Christ brought from Heaven with him, that makes thee walk with thy folded arms and pensive countenance? *Psalm* cxxxii. 16. To see a wicked man merry and jocund, or a Christian sad and dumpish, is alike uncomely. *A feast is made for laughter,* saith *Solomon*, Eccles. x. 19. I am sure God intended his people's joy in the feast of the gospel; mourners were not to sit at God's table, *Deut.* xxvi. Truly the Saints heaviness reflects unkindly upon

upon God himself; we do not commend his cheer, if it doth not cheer us. What saith the world? The Christian's life is but a melancholy walk; surely, thinks the carnal wretch, it is a dry feast they sit at, where so little wine of joy is drunk. And wilt thou confirm them in this their opinion, Christian? Shall they have thy example to produce against Christ and his word, which promise peace and joy to all that will come to this feast? God forbid that thy conversation, wherein thou art to hold forth the word of life, to live in the eyes of the world, and which ought to be as a comment upon the word, to clear up the truth and reality of it to others; that this should so disagree from the text, as to make the glad-some tidings spoken of in it more disputed and questioned in the thoughts of the unbelieving world than before. It is an error I confess, and that a gross one which the *Papists* teach, that we cannot know the scriptures to be the word of God, but by the testimony of the church; yet it is none to say, that a practical testimony from the Saints lives, hath great authority over the consciences of men, to convince them of the truth of the gospel. Now they will believe it is good news indeed the gospel brings, when they can read it in your chearful lives; but when they observe Christians sad with this cup of salvation in their hands, truly they suspect the wine in it is not so good as the preachers commend it to them for; should men see all that trade to the *Indies*, come home poorer than they went, it would be hard to persuade others to venture thither, for all the golden mountains said to be there. O Christians, let the world see you are not losers in your joy, since you have been acquainted with the gospel; give not them cause to think by your uncomfort-able walking, that when they turn Christians, they must bid all joy farewell, and resolve to spend their days in a house of mourning.

Secondly, Is the gospel a message of glad tidings? do not then for shame, Christian, run on the world's score by taking up any of its carnal joy; thou needest not go out of God's house to be merry; here is joy enough in the glad tidings of the gospel, more than thou canst spend, though thou shouldst live at an higher rate than thou dost or canst here on earth. *Abraham* would not take so much as a thread, or shoe-latchet from the King of *Sodom*, Gen. 14. *lest he should say, that he made Abraham rich:* A Christian should deny himself of the

the world's joy and delights, lest they say, these Christians draw their joy out of our cistern. The channel is cut out of the spirit of God, in which he would have his Saints joy run. *If any be merry, let him sing Psalms.* Let the subject of his mirth be spiritual, as on the other hand, *If he be sick, let him pray*, James iii. 13. a spiritual vent is given to both affections of sorrow and joy. A Prince's recreation must not be like a ruffian's, nor a Christian's joy like the carnal man's; if ever there was need to call upon Christians to feed the lamp of their joy with spiritual fuel, holy oil, that drops from the gospel pipe, now the time is, wherein professors do symbolize with the world in their outward bravery, junkettings, fashions, pastimes, and are so kind to the flesh in allowing of, yea, pleading so much for a carnal liberty in these things, that shews too plainly the spiritual joy to be drawn out of these wells of salvation, does not satisfy them, or else they would not make up their draught from this puddle water, which was wont to be thirsted after, only by those that had never drunk of Christ's cup. O! what is the reason that those, who would pass for Christians, forsake this pure wine of gospel joy, for the sophisticated stuff which this whore, the world, presents in her golden cup to them? Is it because the gladsome message of the gospel is grown stale, and so its joy (which once sparkled in the preaching of it, as generous wine doth in the cup, and cheared the hearts of believers with strong consolations) hath now lost its spirits? or can that pure stream of spiritual joy, which hath run so long through the hearts and lives of the Saints in so many generations, without mingling with the brackish water of the world's sensual pleasures, at last fall in with them, and be content to lose its own divine nature and sweetness in such a sink? O no! the gospel is the same it was: the joy it brings as sweet, and brisk, as spiritual, and pure as ever, and will be as long as God and Christ continue to be the same, out of whose bosom of love it first flowed, and is still fed: But the professors of this gospel now are not the same with those holy men and women of primitive times. The world grows old, and men's affections with it chill and cold; we have not our taste so lively, nor our spirits so chaste and pure, to relish the heavenly viands dished forth in the gospel. The cheer is as good as ever, but the guests are worse, we are grown debauched in our judgments, and corrupt in our principles;

no wonder then if carnal in our joys. Error is a whore, it takes away the heart from Christ and his spiritual joys. The head once distempered, soon affects the heart, and by dropping the malignity of its principles upon it, poisons it with carnal affections, and carnal affections cannot fare with any other, than gross and carnal joys. Here, here is the root of the misery of our times. Hath not (think you) the Devil played his game cunningly among us? who by his instruments (transforming themselves into the likeness of angels of light), First, could raise so many credulous souls into a fond expectation of higher attainments in grace and comfort from their new pretended light, than ever, yet the Saints were acquainted with, and at last to make them fall so low, as to accept such sensual pleasures and joys as this world can afford, in full payment for all the glorious things he promised them? Well, sirs, this I hope will make some love the gospel the more, and stick closer to it as long as they live. O Christians, bless God for the glad tidings of the gospel, and never lend an ear to him, that would be telling you other news, except you mean to part with truth to purchase a lie; yea, let it make you careful to draw all your comfort and joy from the gospel's breast. When a carnal heart would be merry, he doth not take the bible down to read; he doth not go into the company of the promises, and walk in the meditation of them; it brings no joy to him, to think of Christ or Heaven; no, he takes down a play-book, seeks some jovial company, goes to the Exchange, or market, to hear what news he can meet with. Every one as his haunt lies: But still it is from the world he expects his joy. And now where lies thy road Christian? whither doth thy soul lead thee for thy joy? dost not thou go to the word, and read there what Christ has done for thee on earth, and is doing for thee in Heaven! is not the throne of grace the *Exchange*, to which thou resortest for good news from that far country, Heaven, where all thy estate lies, and thy best friends live? art not thou listening what promise he will speak peace from to thy soul? if so, thou hast not thy name for nought; thou art a Christian indeed. True students, that love their book indeed, when they have wearied their spirits with study, can recreate them again with study, by making a diversion from that which is severe and knotty, to some more facile and pleasant subject. Thus the true Christian, when his spirits are

are worn and wasted in the severer exercises of christianity; such as fasting and prayer, wherein he afflicts both body and soul for his sins, then he can recover them at the feast of God's love in Christ, where he sees his water turned into wine, and the tears that even now his sins covered his face withal, washed off with the blood of Christ; when his soul is struck into a fear and trembling with the consideration of the justice of God, and the terror of his threatenings and judgments for sin, then the meditation of the sweet promises of the gospel recreate and revive him; so that in the same word, where he meets with his wound, he finds his healing; where he hath his sorrow, there also he receives his joy.

CHAP. III.

A fourfold Peace attributed to the Gospel, and in particular, Peace of Reconciliation, where it is proved there is a Quarrel betwixt God and Man, as also that the Gospel can only take it up, and why God thus laid the Method of Man's Recovery so.

Quest. 2. THE second enquiry follows; what *peace* is here meant, that is attributed to the *Gospel?* peace is a comprehensive word. *We looked for peace* (saith the Prophet) *but no good came,* Jer. viii. 15. Peace brings, and carries away again with it all good, as the sun doth light to and from the world; when Christ would to the utmost express how well he wished his disciples, he wraps up all the happiness which his large heart could wish them in this blessing of peace, *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you,* John xiv. 27. Now take peace in its greatest latitude, if not spurious, and it will be found to grow upon this gospel-root. So that we shall lay the conclusion in general terms.

Doct. True peace is the blessing of the gospel, and only

of the gospel. This will appear in the several kinds of peace. Which may be sorted into these four.

First, Peace with God, which we may call peace of reconciliation.

Secondly, Peace with ourselves, or peace of conscience.

Thirdly, Peace with one another, or peace of love and unity.

Fourthly, Peace with the other creatures, even the most hurtful, which may be called a peace of indemnity and service.

To begin where all other begin, with peace of reconciliation with God. For when man fell out with God, he fell out with himself, and all the world besides; and he can never come to be at peace with these, till his peace be made with God, *Tranquillus Deus, tranquillat omnia;* the point then is,

Doct. 1. The peace of reconciliation with God is the blessing of the gospel. Three things are here to be done in prosecution of the point. First, I shall shew you that there is a quarrel between God and man. Secondly, that the gospel, and only the gospel takes this up, and makes peace betwixt God and man. Thirdly, why God conveys this peace of reconciliation into the world in this way, and by this method.

First, There is a quarrel depending betwixt God and the sons of men; open acts of hostility done by one nation against another, proclaim there is a war commenced. Now such acts of hostility pass betwixt God and man: Bullets fly thick to and fro on either hand. Man he lets fly against God though against his will he shoots short, whole vollies of sins and impieties. The best of Saints acknowledge thus much of themselves, before converting grace took them off, Tit. iii. 3. *We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures.* Mark the last words, *serving lusts and pleasures.* They were in pay to sin, willing to fight against God, and side with this his *only enemy.* Not a faculty of his soul, or member of his body, which is not in arms against him. *The carnal mind* (saith the Apostle) *is enmity against God,* Rom. viii. 7. And if there be war in the mind, to be sure there can be no peace in the members (inferior faculties of the soul) which are all commanded by it. Indeed we are by nature worst in our best

best part, the enmity against God is chiefly seated in the superior faculties of the soul. As in armies, the common soldiery are wholly taken up with the booty and spoil they get by the war, without much minding one side or other; but the more principal officers, especially the Prince or General, these go into the field full of enmity against them that oppose them: so the inferior faculties seek only satisfaction to their sensual appetite in the booty that sin affords, but the superior faculties of the mind, this comes forth more directly against God, and opposeth his sovereignty; yea, if it could lay a plot effectually to take away the life of God himself, there is enmity enough in the carnal mind to put it into execution. And as man is in arms against God, so is he against man. *He is angry with the wicked every day he hath bent his bow, and made it ready, he hath also prepared for him the instruments of death,* Psal. vii. 11. God hath set up his royal standard in defiance of all the sons and daughters of apostate *Adam*, who from his own mouth are proclaimed rebels and traitors to his crown and dignity; and as against such he hath taken the field, as with fire and sword to be avenged on them. Yea, he gives the world sufficient testimony of his incensed wrath, by that of it which is revealed from Heaven daily in the judgments executed upon sinners, and those many but of a span long, before they can shew what nature they have by actual sin, yet crushed to death by God's righteous foot, only for the viporous kind of which they come. At every door where sin sets its foot, there the wrath of God meets us. Every faculty of soul, and member of body, are used as a weapon of unrighteousness against God; so every one hath is portion of wrath, even to the tip of the tongue. As man is sinful all over, so is he cursed all over. Inside and outside, soul and body, is writ all with woes and curses, so close and full, that there is not room for another to interline, or add to what God hath written.

In a word, so fiery is the Lord's wrath against sinful man, that all the creatures share with him in it. Though God takes his aim at man, and levels his arrows primarily at his very heart, yet as they go, they light upon the creature; God's curse blasts the whole creation for man's sake, and so he pays him some of his misery from the hand of those creatures which were primitively ordained to minister to him in his

his happy state, yea, contribute some drops to the filling of his cup. As an enraged army makes spoil and havock of all in their enemies land, destroys their provision, stops or poisons their waters, burns up their houses, and lets out his fury on all his hand comes at. Truly thus, God plagues man in every creature, not one escapes his hand. The bread we eat, the water we drink, and air we breathe, are poisoned with the curse of God, of which they who live longest, die at last. And all these are no more to Hell, than a few files of men to the whole body of an army; God doth but skirmish with sinners here by some small parties of his judgments sent out, to let them know they have an enemy alive, that observes their motions, takes the alarm their sins give him, and can be too hard for them when he pleases; but it is in Hell where he falls on with his whole power. There sinners *shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power,* 2 Thes. i. 9.

Secondly, The gospel takes this quarrel up, therefore called the *Gospel of Peace.* This will appear in two particulars. First, the gospel presents us with the articles of peace, which God offers graciously to treat upon with the children of men, and this none but the gospel doth. Secondly, the gospel preached and published, is the great instrument of God to effect this peace thus offered.

First, The gospel presents us with the articles of peace, whereby God graciously offers to treat and conclude an inviolable peace with rebellious man. In it we have the whole method, which God laid in his own thoughts, from eternity, of reconciling poor sinners to himself. The gospel is God's heart in print. The precious promises of the gospel are Heaven's court-rolls, translated into the creatures language, in which are exposed to the view of our faith, all the counsels and purposes of love and mercy, which were concluded on by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for the recovery of lost man by Jesus Christ, who was sent as Heaven's plenipotentiary to earth, fully empowered and enabled, not only by preaching, to treat of a peace as desired on God's part, to be concluded between God and man, but by the purchase of his death to procure a peace, and by his spirit to seal and ratify the same to all those who, believing the credential letters which God sent with him, in the miracles wrought

wrought by him, and especially the testimony which the Scripture gives of him, do by a faith unfeigned receive him into their souls, as their only Lord and Saviour. This is such a notion as is not to be learnt elsewhere. A deep silence we find concerning this in *Aristotle* and *Tully*. They cannot tell us how a poor sinner may be at peace with God; nothing of this to be spelt from the Covenant God made with *Adam*. That shuts the sinner up in a dark dungeon of despair, bids him look for nothing but what the wrath of a just God can measure out to him. Thus the guilty creature is surrounded on every side as with a deluge of wrath; no hope nor help to be heard of, till the gospel, like a dove, brings the olive-branch of peace, and tells him that the tide is turned, and that flood of wrath which was poured on man for his sin, is now fallen into another channel, even upon Christ, who was made a curse for us, and hath not only drunk of the brook that lay in the way, and hindered our passage to God, but hath drunk it off; so that where a sea was, now appears dry land, and a safe and fair causeway, called, (*Heb.* x. 20.) *living way*, by which every truly repenting and believing sinner may pass without any danger, from the justice of God, into the love and favour of God. *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*, Rom. v. 1. We are entirely beholden to the gospel for the discovery of this secret, which the *Apostle* solemnly acknowledgeth, 2 *Tim.* i. 10. where Christ is said to *bring life and immortality to light by the Gospel.* It lay hid in the womb of God's purpose, till the gospel arose, and let us into the knowledge of it, as the light of the sun reveals to the eye what was before, but what could not be seen without its light; and therefore it is not only called a living way, but a *new and living way which he hath consecrated for us*, so new, that the heart of man never was acquainted with one thought of it, till the gospel opens it, according to that of *Isa.* xlii. 16. *I will bring the blind by a way he knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known.*

Secondly, The gospel published and preached, is the great instrument of God to effect this peace. Before peace be concluded betwixt God and the creature, both must be agreed; as God to pardon, so the sinner to accept and embrace peace upon God's own terms; but how shall this be done?

done? The heart of man is so deeply rooted in its enmity against God, that it requires a strength to pluck up this, equal with that which tears up mountains, and carries rocks from one place to another. The gospel preached is the instrument which God useth for the effecting of it. *Rom.* i. 16. *I am not ashamed* (saith the Apostle there) *of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation.* It is the chariot wherein the spirit rides victoriously, when he makes his entrance into the heart of man; called therefore *the Ministration of the Spirit*, 2 Cor. iii. 8. He fashions a-new the heart, as he framed the world at first with a word speaking. This is *the day of God's power, wherein he makes his people willing.* Power indeed to make those that had the seeds of war sown in their very natures against God, willing to be friends with him. Unheard of power, as if the beating of a drum should carry such a charm along with its sound, to make those on the enemy's side, upon the hearing of it to throw down their arms, and to seek peace at his hand, against whom they even now took the field with great rage and fury; such a secret power accompanies the gospel. It strikes many times not only the sinner's sword out of his hand, while it is stretched out against God; but the enmity out of his heart, and brings the stoutest rebel upon his knee, humbly to crave the benefit of the articles of peace published in the gospel. It makes sinners so pliant and tractable to the call of God in the gospel, that they on a sudden, (upon the hearing of a *Gospel* sermon) forget their own natural affections, which they have had to their beloved lusts, and leap out of their embraces with indignation, lest they should keep God and them at odds one moment longer. Now follows the third.

Quest. Why doth God convey his peace of reconciliation by this channel unto the sons of men? Or in plainer terms, Why doth God chuse to reconcile poor sinners to himself by Christ? For this is the peace which the gospel proclaims, *Colos.* i. 20. *And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself;* And *vers.* 21, 22. *And you that were sometimes alienated, and enemies* in your mind by wicked works; *yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable, and unreproveable in his sight.*

Answ.

Answ. They are too bold with God, who say, That he could not find out another way; Who can tell that, except God himself had told him so? Alas! how unmeet is the short line of our created understanding for such a daring attempt, as to fathom the unsearchableness of God's omnipotent wisdom? To determine what God can, and what he cannot do? But we may say that the wisdom of God could not have laid the method of salvation more advantageous to the exalting of his own glorious name, and his poor creatures' happiness, than in this expedient of reconciling them to himself by Christ our great peace-maker. This transaction hath in it a happy temperament, to solve all the difficulties on either hand; and for its mysterious contrivance, exceeds the workmanship which God put forth in making this exterior world, though in its kind so perfect and glorious, that the least creature tells its Maker to be a Deity, and puts the Atheist to shame in his own conscience that will not believe so; yet it exceeds this goodly frame of Heaven and earth, as far as the watch itself doth the case which covers it. Indeed, God intended by this way of reconciling poor sinners to himself, to make work for Angels and Saints to admire the mystery of his wisdom, power, and love therein to everlasting. O! when they shall all meet together in Heaven, and there have the whole counsel of God unfolded to them; when they shall behold what seas were dried up, and what rocks of creature-impossibilities digged through by the omnipotent wisdom and love of God, before a sinner's peace could be obtained, and then behold the work, notwithstanding all this, to be effected and brought to a happy perfection. O! how will they be swallowed up in adoring the abyss of his wisdom, who laid the platform of all this according to the eternal counsel of his own will; surely, the sun doth not so much exceed the strength of our mortal eyes, as the glory of this will their understandings from ever fully comprehending it. This, this is the piece which God drew on purpose, for its rare workmanship, to beautify Heaven itself withal; when Christ returned to Heaven, he carried none of this world's rarities with him; not its silver and gold; not crowns and diadems, which here men venture their lives, yea, part with their souls so prodigally for. Alas! what are these, and the whole pride and gallantry of this world to Heaven? That which it glories

most of, suits Heaven no better than the beggar's dish and scraps do a Prince's table; or the patched tattered coat of the one, the wardrobe of the other. No, the Lord Christ came on a higher design than this to earth: The enterprize he undertook to atchieve, was to negociate, yea, effect a peace betwixt God and his rebel-creature man, that had by his revolt incurred his just wrath and vengeance; this was a work that became God himself so well to engage in, that he thought none high and worthy enough to be trusted with the transacting of it beneath his only Son, who staid here but while he had brought this negociation to a happy period; and then carried the joyful tidings of its being finished back with him to Heaven, which made his return infinitely welcome to his Father, and all the glorious inhabitants of Heaven his attendants.

CHAP. IV.

A more particular Account why God reconciled Sinners to himself by Christ.

SECT. I.

FIRST, God lays this method of reconciling sinners to himself by Christ, that he might give the deepest testimony of his perfect hatred to sin in that very act, wherein he expresseth the highest love and mercy to sinners. No act of mercy and love like that of pardoning sin. To receive a reconciled sinner into Heaven, is not so great an advance, as to take a rebel into a state of favour and reconciliation. The terms here are infinitely wider; there is reason to expect the one, none to look for the other. It is pure mercy to pardon, but truth being pardoned to save. Well, when God puts forth this very act, he will have the creature see his hatred to sin,

writ

writ upon the face of that love he shews to the sinner. And truly this was not needful, if we consider how hard it is for our corrupt hearts to conceive of God's mercy without some dishonourable reflection upon his holiness. *I kept silence* (saith God) *Psalm* l. And what inference doth the wicked draw from thence? *Thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself;* that is, thou thoughtest I liked sin as well as thyself. Now, if so plain and easy a text as God's forbearing mercy be wrested, and a false gloss so repugnant, not only to the end of God therein, but to the holy nature of God; how much more subject is forgiving mercy (that is so far superlative to that, and infinitely more luscious to the sinner's palate) to be abused? Some men gaze so long on this pleasing object, that they are not willing to look off, and see any other attribute in God. Now, in this way of reconciling himself to sinners by Christ, he hath given such an argument to convince sinners, that he is an implacable hater of sin, as hath not its fellow. It is true, every threat in the bible tells us that sin finds no favour in God's heart; the guilty consciences of men, that haunt them home, and follow them into their own bosoms, continually yelling and crying damnation in their ears; the remarkable judgments which now and then take hold of sinners in this world, and much more the furnace which is heating for them in another, shew abundantly how hot and burning God's heart within him is in wrath against sin. But when we see him run upon his Son, and lay the envenomed knife of his wrath to his throat, yea, thrust it into his very heart, and there let it stick for all the supplications and prayers, which in his bitter agonies he offered up to his Father with strong crying and tears, without the least sparing of him, till he had forced his life (in a throng of sad groans and sighs) out of his body, and therewith paid justice the full debt, which he had as man's surety undertook to discharge. This, this doth give us a greater advantage to conceive of God's hatred to sin, than if we could stand in a place, to see what entertainment the damned find in Hell, and at once behold all the torments they endure. Alas! their backs are not broad enough to bear the whole weight of God's wrath at once, it being infinite, and they finite; which if they could, we should not find them lying in that prison for non-payment. But behold one here, who had the whole curse of sin at once upon

his back. Indeed, their sufferings are infinite, *extensive*, because everlasting; but his were infinite, *intensive*; he paid in one sum what they shall be ever paying, and yet never come to the last farthing. *The chastisement of our peace was upon him*, Isaiah liii. 5. *He hath laid on him the iniquity of us all*, ver. 6. Or, he hath made the iniquity of us all to meet in him; the whole curse met in him, as all streams do in the sea. A vertual collection of all the threatenings denounced against sin, and all laid on him. And now, take but one step more, and consider in how near relations Christ stood in to God, as also the infinite and unspeakable love with which it was filled, and mutually endeared on each hand, and this at the very same time, when he ascended the stage for this bloody tragedy to be acted on him in: And I think that you are at the highest stair the word of God can lead you, to ascend by into the meditation of this subject. Should you see a father that has but one only son, and can have no more, make him his mittimus to prison, come into court himself, and sit Judge upon his life, with his own lips pass sentence of death upon him, and order that it be executed with the most exquisite torments that may be; yea, go to the place himself, and with his own eyes, and those not full of water, as mourning for his death, but full of fire and fury; yea, a countenance every way so set, as might tell all that see it, the man took pleasure in his child's death; you would say, surely he bitterly hates his son, or the sin his son hath committed. This you see in God the Father towards his Son; it was he more than men or Devil's, that procured his death. Christ took notice of this, that the warrant for his death, had his Father's hand and seal to it; *Shall I not drink of the cup my Father gives me?* Yea, he stands by and rejoiceth in it; his blood was the *wine that made glad the heart of God; it pleaseth the Lord to bruise him*, Isaiah liii. 10.

When God corrects a Saint, he doth it in a manner unwillingly; but when Christ suffers, it pleaseth him; and not this from want of love in his heart to Christ, nor that any disobedience in Christ had hardened his Father's heart against him, for he never displeased him; but from the hatred he had to sin, and zeal to exalt his mercy towards sinners, by satisfying his justice on his Son.

SECT.

SECT. II.

Secondly, He effected our peace by Christ, that he might for ever hide pride from his Saints eyes. Pride was the stone on which both Angels and man stumbled and fell. In man's recovery, therefore, he will roll that stone as far as may be out of the way; he will lay that knife aside with which man did himself the mischief. And that he may do this, he transacts the whole business by Christ for them. Man's project was to cut off the entail of his obedience to God, and set up for himself, as a free and absolute Prince, without holding upon his maker; a strange plot! for to effect this, he must first have thrown away that being which God gave him, and by a self-creation, if such a thing had been possible, have bestowed a new one upon himself; then indeed, and not till then, he might have had his will. But, alas! his pride to be what he could not, lost him what he had; yet how foolish soever it now appears, and infeasible, that was the plot pride had sprung in man's heart. Now God, to preserve his children from all future assaults and batteries of Hell at this door, chose such a way of reconciling and saving them, that when the Prince of the world comes to tempt them to pride, he should find nothing in them to give the least countenance or colour to such a motion; so that of all sins, pride is such an one, as we may wonder how it should grow; for it hath no other root to bear it up, but what is found in man's dreaming fancy and imagination. It grows, as sometimes we shall see a mushroom, or moss among stones, where little or no soil is for its root to take hold of. God in this gospel-way of reconciling sinners by Christ, makes him fetch all from without doors. Wilt thou poor soul have peace with God? thou must not have it from thine own penance for thy sins. *The chastisement of our peace was upon him*, Isaiah liii. 5. O! know thou art not thy own peace-maker. That is Christ's name, who did that work, *Eph.* ii. 14. *For he is our peace, who hath made both one, Jew* and *Gentile*, one with God, and one with one another. Wouldst thou be righteous? then thou must not appear before God in thy own clothes: it is another's righteousness,

teousness, not thy own, that is provided for thee; *Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness,* Isaiah xlv. 24. In a word, wouldst thou ever have a right in Heaven's glory? Thy penny is not good silver to purchase it with; the price must not come out of thy purse, but Christ's heart; and, therefore, as it is called the *purchased possession*, in regard of Christ, because he obtained it for us with a great sum, not silver and gold, but his precious blood; so *an inheritance*, in regard of us, because it descends upon us as freely as the father's estate on his child, *Eph.* i. 14. And why all this? But that the lofty looks of man may be humbled, and the haughtiness of man should be bowed down, and the Lord alone exalted in the day of our salvation. The *Manna* is expounded by Christ himself to be a type of him, *John* vi. 32. *The bread of God is he which cometh down from Heaven, and giveth life to the world.* Now observe, wherefore God chose that way of feeding them in the wilderness. *Deut.* viii. 16. *Who fed thee in the wilderness with Manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee?* But wherein lay this great humbling of them; were they not shrewdly humbled, think you, to be fed with a dainty dish, which had God for its *Cook*, and is called *Angels food* for its delicacy? *Psalm* lxxviii. 25. Such, that if they needed any repast, might well suit their table? I answer, it was not the meanness of the fare, but the manner of having it, which God intended should humble them. Man is proud, and loves to be his own provider, and not stand to another's allowance; the same feast sent in by the charity and bounty of another, will not go down so well with his high stomach, as when it is provided at his own cost and charges: he had rather have the honour of keeping his own house, though mean, than to live higher upon the alms and allowance of another's charity: This made them wish themselves at their onions in their own gardens in *Egypt*, and flesh-pots there; which, though they were grosser diet, liked them better, because bought with their own penny.

SECT. III.

Thirdly, That it might be a peace with the greatest advantage possible, that God and man might meet again on better

better terms by this pacification, than when *Adam* stood in all his primitive glory. God no doubt would not have let the beauty of his first workmanship to be so defaced by sin, had he not meant to have reared a more magnificent structure out of its ruins. Now God intending to print man's happiness in the second edition with a fairer character than at the first, he employs Christ in the work, as the only fit instrument to accomplish so great a design; Christ himself tells us as much, *John* x. 10. *I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly:* His coming was not to give those who were dead and damned bare peace, naked life, but *more abundantly* than ever man had them before the breach. It was Christ in the second temple, who filled it with a glory superlative to the first: Christ in the second creation of man, that lifts his head above his first state in happiness. As *Adam* was a pattern to all his seed in his innocent state, that should they all have been (if sin had not altered the scene, and turned the tables); so Christ is a pattern to all his seed of that glory which they shall be clothed with; 1 *John* iii. 2. *We are now the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, when he appears, we shall be like him,* that is, *our vile bodies like his body, glorious,* Phil. iii. and our souls also like his glorious soul. Now by how much our nature in Christ is more glorious than it was in *Adam*, by so much the state of a reconciled sinner surpasseth *Adam*'s first condition. Take it in two particulars: *First,* The reconciled sinner hath the advantage of *Adam* in his union to God: *Secondly,* In his communion with God.

First, As it is nearer: *Secondly,* As it is stronger.

First, It is nearer, because God and man make one person in Christ; this is such a mystery, as was not heard of by *Adam* in all his glory; he indeed was in league of love and friendship with God, and that was the best flower in his crown; but he could lay no claim to such kindred and consanguinity, as now (with reverence be it spoken) the reconciled soul can with God; this comes in by the marriage of the divine nature with the human, in the person of Christ, which personal union is the foundation of another, a *mystical union* betwixt Christ and the person of every believer; and this is so near an union, that as by the union of the divine nature and human, there is one person; so also by this mystical

mystical union, the Saints and their head make one Christ, *For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being members, are one body; so also is Christ,* 1 Cor. xii. 12. *Ecclesia est Christus explicatus;* the Church is nothing but Christ displayed: who can speak what an advance is this to the human nature in general, and to the persons of believers especially? Such an one, as it leaves not only *Adam*, but angels beneath a reconciled sinner in this respect. *Adam* at first was made but little lower than the angels, but by this pair of unions, God hath set the reconciled soul more than a little above them both; for Christ, by taking on him not the nature of angels (though the more ancient and noble house), but the seed of *Abraham*, made the elder serve the younger, even angels themselves minister to the meanest Saint, as unto their master's heir, *Heb.* i. 14.

Secondly, As the union is nearer, so it is stronger; therefore stronger, because nearer; the closer stones stand together, the stronger the building. The union betwixt God and *Adam* in the first covenant was not so near, but *Adam* might fall, and yet God's glory stands entire and unshaken; but the union now is so close and strong betwixt Christ and his Saints, that Christ cannot be Christ without his members; *because I live* (saith Christ) *ye shall live also,* John xiv. 19. implying that their life was bound up in his, and it was as easy for him to be turned out of heaven, as for them to be kept out, *Eph.* i. 23. The church is called there Christ's body, *the fulness of him that filleth all in all.* A body is not full, if it hath not every member and joint, though never so little, and them in their fulness too. The Saint's grace is Christ's glory, 2 *Cor.* viii. 23. and though his essential glory as God receives no filling from his Saints or their graces, yet consider him in his Mediatorship, as head of his church; so Christ's glory is daily filling, as the Elect are called in daily, and as those that are called in, grow up to their appointed stature. Christ hath not his fulness, till the Saints have their perfection and complement of grace in heaven's glory.

Secondly, In his communion with God; the nearer (we use to say) the dearer; communion results from union; if the union be nearer and stronger between a reconciled soul and God than *Adam*'s was, his communion must needs be sweeter and fuller. Why else is the communion of husband and

and wife fuller, than of friend and friend? but because the union is closer. God converseth with *Adam*, as a friend with his friend and ally; but with the reconciled soul, as a husband with his wife. *Thy Maker is thy Husband*, Isaiah liv. 5.

There is a double sweetness peculiar to the reconciled sinner's communion with God.

First, There is in Christ a foundation laid for greater familiarity with God, than *Adam* was at first capable of. He indeed was *the Son of God*, yet he was kept at a farther distance, and treated with more state and majesty from God, than now the reconciled soul is; for though he was the Son of God by *Creation*, yet the *Son of God* was not then the *son of man by Incarnation;* and at this door comes in the believer's sweetest familiarity with God: the Christian cannot lift up now an eye of faith to God, but he sees his own nature standing upon the throne in the person of Christ. And if the sight of *Joseph* at *Pharaoh*'s right hand, in court favour and honour, sent the Patriarch's home with such joyful news to their aged father, what a ravishing message of joy must faith carry then to the soul of a reconciled sinner, when it comes in (after some vision of love in an ordinance) and saith, Chear up (O my soul) I see Jesus Christ, thy near kinsman, at God's right hand in glory, to whom all power is given in heaven and earth; fear not, he is so nigh in blood to thee, that he cannot be unmindful of thee, except he should do what is unnatural in itself, that is, *hide himself from his own flesh.* The lower a Prince stoops to the meanest of his subjects, the more familiar he makes himself to his subjects. It was a wonderful condescension in the great God (who can have no compeer) first to make man, and then strike so friendly a league and covenant with him. This God doth with every reconciled soul, and that enriched with so many astonishing circumstances of condescending grace, as must needs speak the way of the believer's access to God more familiarly. God doth in this second and new alliance with his poor creature, descend from his throne, exchange his majestic robes of glory for the rags of man's frail flesh; he leaves his palace, to live for a time in his creature's humble cottage, and there not only familiarly converses with him, but (which is stranger) ministers to him, yea, which is more than all these, he surrenders himself up to endure all man-

ner of indignities from his sorry creature's hand. And when this his coarse entertainment is done, back he posts to heaven, not to complain to his Father, how he hath been abused here below, and raise heaven's power against those that had so ill entreated him; but to make ready heaven's palace for the reception of those who had thus abused him, and now accept of his grace: And lest these left on earth should fear his re-assumed royalty and majesty in heaven's glory, would make some alteration with their affairs in his heart; to give them therefore a constant demonstration, that he would be the same in the heighth of his honour, that he was in the depth of his abasement, he returns back in the same clothes he had borrowed of their nature, to wear them on the throne in all his glory (only some princely cost bestowed, to put them into the fashion of that heavenly kingdom, and make them suit with his glorified state), giving them a pattern by this, what their own vile bodies (which are now so dishonourable) shall be made another day. Now none of all those circumstances were found in God's first administration to *Adam*, and therefore the more familiar.

Secondly, There is the sweetness of pardoning mercy, and the bleeding love of Christ (who by his death purchased it for him) to be tasted in the reconciled soul's communion with God. This lump of sugar *Adam* had not in his cup. He knew what the love of a giving God meant, but was a stranger to the mercy of a forgiving God. The reconciled soul experiences both. The love of a father (more than ordinary kind) is a great comfort to a dutiful child, one that never displeased his father: but it carries no such wonder in it to our thoughts, as the compassion and melting bowels of a father towards a rebellious child doth; and certainly the prodigal child that is received again into his father's embraces, hath the advantage for loving his father, more than his brother that never came under his father's displeasure. O this pardoning mercy, and the love of Christ that procured it; they are the most spacious and fruitful heads for a gracious soul to enlarge his sweetest meditations upon here on earth; but who can conceive what ravishing music glorified Saints will make in running division on this sweet note? I am sure the song their harps are tuned unto is *the Song of the Lamb*, Rev. xv. 2, 3. The Saints finished happiness in heaven's glory, is a composition of all the rare

rare ingredients possible, so tempered by the wise hand of God, that as none could well be spared, so not the taste of any one shall be lost in another; but this of pardoning mercy, and the stupendous love and wisdom of God through Christ therein, shall give a sweet relish to all, and be tasted above all the rest.

CHAP. V.

An Exhortation to embrace this Peace of Reconciliation, offered in the Gospel.

Use 1. LET it provoke every one to see they have an interest in this peace of *Reconciliation* with God, which the Gospel brings. Peace with God! surely it is worth the sinner's having, or else the angels were ill employed, when they welcomed the tidings thereof into the world at our Saviour's birth with such acclamations of joy; *Glory to God, on earth Peace,* Luke ii. 14. Yea, Christ himself was deceived in his purchase; who if a sinner's peace with God be not of high price and value, hath little to shew for the effusion of his heart-blood, which he thought well spent to gain it. But this we cannot believe; and yet to see how freely God offers peace and pardon to the sons of men, through Christ, and how coy, yea, sullen and cross they are to the motion; one that does not well know them both (God's infinite goodness, and wretched man's horrible baseness) might be ready to think it some low-prized ware which lay upon God's hands; and this to be the cause why God is so earnest to put it off, and man so loth to take it. Ah poor deluded wretches! who is the wicked counsellor that hardens your hearts from embracing these mercies? None sure but a Devil can hate God and you so much. And hath he sped so well in his own quarrel against God, that he should be hearkened to by thee poor sinner? Can he give thee armour that will quench God's bullets? how then is it that he is so unkind to

himself, as to let them lie burning in his own bosom to his unspeakable torment? or will he lend thee any pity, when thou hast, by his advice, undone thyself? Alas! no more than the cruel wolf doth the silly sheep, when he hath sucked her blood, and torn her in pieces. Think, and think again, poor sinner, what answer thou meanest to send to Heaven before God calls his ambassadors home, and the treaty break up, never to be renewed. And that thou mayest not want some seasonable matter for thy musing thoughts to enlarge upon on this subject, let me desire thee to treat with thy own heart upon these four heads.

First, Consider what it is that stands before thee in the offer.

Secondly, Who it is that offers it.

Thirdly, How he offers it.

Fourthly, What thou dost when thou refusest it.

SECT. I.

First, Consider what that is which is offered thee, *Peace with God.* A thing so indispensable, thou canst not have less; and so comprehensive thou needest have no more than this, and what cometh with it to make thee truly, fully happy; of all the variety of enjoyments with which it is possible thy table can be spread, this is a dish can least be spared; take away peace, and that but of an inferior nature (outward peace), and the feast is spoiled, though it be on a Prince's table.

David's children had but little stomach to their royal dinner, when one of them was slain that sat at the board with them. And what taste can you have in all your junkets, while God is in array against you, many sinners slain before your eye by God's judgments, and the same sword that hath let out their blood at thy throat while the meat is in thy mouth? Methinks your sweet morsels should stick in your throat, and hardly get down, while you muse on these things. While a controversy yet depends betwixt God and thee, thy sins are unpardoned, and thou a dead damned creature, however thou frolickest it for the present in thy prison. Would you not wonder to see a man at his sport, hunting or hawking, and one should tell you this man is to be hanged to-morrow? Truly God is more merciful to thee than

than thou canst promise thyself, if he stay the execution till another day. I confess when I meet a man, whose life proclaims him an unreconciled sinner, and see him spruce up himself in his fine clothes, entertain himself with the joy of his children, estate, honour, or the like, in this life; it administers matter of admiration to me, what such an one thinks of God or himself. Canst thou think it is long thou shalt sit at this fire of thorns thou hast kindled, and not God fire thee? it must needs provoke a creditor to see his debtor live high, and go brave, all at his cost, and all the while never think of getting out of his debt, or make his peace with him? much more doth it God, to see sinners spend upon his bounty, lead joyful jovial lives in the abundance of outward enjoyments he lends them; but take no thought of making peace with him in whose debt-book they are so deep in arrears. What folly had it been for the *Jews*, when *Ahashuerus* had sealed the warrant for their destruction, to have gone and painted their houses, planted their fields, and let out their hearts in the enjoyment of their estates, without taking care in the first place of getting that bloody decree reversed? a worse sot art thou, that dost all those, while thou carriest the sentence of death from God's mouth about thee in thy own conscience. Sir *Thomas More*, when in the *Tower*, would not so much as trim himself, saying, *There was a controversy betwixt the King and him for his head, and till that was at a happy end he would be at no cost about it.* Certainly all the cost you bestow on yourselves, to make your lives pleasant and joyous to you, is mere folly till it be decided what will become of the suit betwixt God and you, not for your heads, but souls, yea, soul and body, whether for heaven or hell. O were it not thy wisest course to begin with making thy peace, and then thou mayest soon lead a happy life. We say, *He that gets out of debt grows rich.* I am sure the reconciled soul cannot be poor. As soon as peace is concluded, a free trade is opened betwixt God and the soul. If once pardoned, thou mayest then sail to any port that lies in God's dominions, and be welcome; all the promises stand open with their rich treasure; take poor soul full laden in of all the precious things they afford, even as much as thy faith can bear, and none shall hinder thee. As a man may draw the wine of a whole vessel through one tap, so faith

faith may draw the comfort of all the Covenant out of this one promise of reconciliation. If reconciled, then the door is open to let thee into communion with God in all his ordinances. God and thou being agreed, may now walk together; whereas before thou couldst not look into God's presence, but his heart rose against thee, as one at the sight of his enemy, ready to draw upon thee with his judgments. *The Smith* (we say) *and his penny, both are black;* so wert thou with all thy duties and performances, while unreconciled in his eye; but now *thy voice is sweet, and countenance comely.* All the attributes of God, thy ally, are thine; *his horses and chariots are thine,* as *Jehoshaphat* told *Ahab;* when ever an enemy puts thee in fear, thou knowest where to have a friend that will take part with thee; all his providence, though like bees, they fly some this way, and some that, yea, one contrary to another, as thou thinkest impossible to trace them, yet they are all at work for thee, and thy soul is the hive wherein they will unlade the sweet fruit of all their labour, though possibly it may be nigh the evening of thy days, before thou findest it. In a word, if reconciled, thou standest next to Heaven; *Whom he justifies, them he glorifies,* Rom. viii. 30, thou art sure to be there, as soon as death rends the veil of thy flesh, which is all that interposeth between thee and it.

SECT. II.

Secondly, Consider who it is that offers peace to thee, the great God; and 'tis hard to say which speaks the greatest wonder; for God to offer or thee to deny. We marvel not to see the undutiful child on his knee, labouring to soften his father's heart with his tears, which he hath hardened against him with his rebellions; nor a condemned traitor prostrate at his Prince's foot, begging for his life, forfeited to the justice of the law; but it is something strange to see the father become suppliant to his child, more for the traitor to open his dungeon door, and find his Prince standing there, and that upon no other errand than to desire him to accept of a pardon. And yet self-love may be the great motive for this seeming self-denial. The parent doth but love

love himself when he steps below his place to gain his child, that carries so much of its parent's life about him. And such necessity of state there is sometimes, that great Princes are forced to stoop to the meanest, yea, worst of their subjects. A Prince's safety may be so intimately concerned in a traitor's life, that he cannot cut off his head without imminent danger to the crown that stands upon his his own.—But none of these streights forced God to take up thoughts of peace to his poor creature; no, they are the birth of free condescending love; and now think again, sinner, before the great God hath a denial from thee. If a poor neighbour, one that hath done thee wrong, and not received it from thee, comes to thee, and desires peace, shouldst thou reject the motion, would not thy conscience reproach thee to thy dying day? How then wilt thou endure to look God or conscience in the face if thou refusest peace at God's hands? that doth not treat like men, when their sword is broke and they cannot fight; but when he hath absolute power over thy life, which is ever in his hands, yea a God that hath received the wrong, and never did thee any; yea, should have done thee none, if he had long before this hanged thee up in chains of darkness among the damned.

SECT. III.

Thirdly, Consider how God offers thee peace.

First, He doth it sincerely, he covers not fraud under a treaty of peace. Among men there hath been horrible juggling in this case. The flag of peace is oft hung out at lip, only to draw them within the reach of their dagger, which is ready to smite them, as *Joab* did *Abner* under the fifth rib. In all the civil wars of *France*, the poor Protestants found peace more costly to them than war; they beat the Papists in the field, when open enemies, but were betrayed by them in the chamber when false friends. But for thy comfort know, it is a God of truth thou treatest with; never did he shed the blood of war in peace; or give a soul to the sword of his wrath, after quarter taken, and peace given; *If we confess, he is just and faithful to forgive;* his promises are not yea and nay, like the Devil's, who lays them

them so, that he may have the credit both ways. No, the very heart of God may be seen, as through a crystal window, in the promise; *they are all Yea and Amen in Christ*, 2 Cor. i. 20.

Secondly, He offers peace affectionately; his heart is deeply engaged in the tenders of mercy to poor sinners, which will appear,

First, In his contriving a way for reconciling sinners to himself. What men strongly desire, they stretch their wits to the utmost how to accomplish. *The liberal man deviseth liberal things*, Isa. xxxii. 8. It shews the heart exceeding large in charity, when a man shall sit down and study how he may find out ways for the exercising of it; whereas most men beat their brains how they may save their purses, and escape with giving as little as may be to the poor.—What a rare invention hath God found out for shewing mercy, which hath so many mysterious passages in it, Angels themselves are put hither to school, that by studying this mystery of God's reconciling sinners to himself by Christ, they might *know the manifold wisdom of God*, Eph. iii. 10.

Secondly, By the early discovery he made of this to the sons of men. That Prince might well be admired for his merciful heart, (if any history could shew such an one to have swayed a sceptre in the world) who, upon some horrid treason plotted against his crown and royal person, and and that by one obliged to him with the highest favours possible, could yet not only find in his heart to pardon the rebel, but also stoop so far as to be himself the messenger that should carry the news of this his gracious purpose to the traitor in prison, before ever he relented, or had it in his thoughts to sue for mercy, and the same day in which the villanous attempt was made, that the poor wretch might not languish so much as one night under the horror of his despairing thoughts; certainly such a Prince would pass for a non-such in mercy among the sons of men. How then must our thoughts be quite swallowed up into an admiration of this stupendous act of mercy, which the great God expresseth to fallen man, wherein he did all this for his rebel creature? for no sooner had man broke his peace, and taken up rebellious arms against his Maker, but the Lord's heart relented towards him, and could not let the sun go down in his

his wrath against him, but must, in the very same day that he sinned, let him hear of a Saviour by preaching peace to him, *in the seed of the woman*, Gen. iii. 15, little did *Adam* think God had such a message in his mouth for him, when he first heard him coming towards him, and for fear ran his head into a bush, meditating a flight from him, if he had known whither to have gone. O that *Adam where art thou?* sounded no doubt in his guilty ears, like the voice of an avenging God, calling him a malefactor to execution, but it proved the voice of a gracious God, coming, not to meet man in his way returning to him, but to seek him out who had lost all thoughts of him, that he might give some ease to his own gracious heart, now full of mercy to his poor creature, by disclosing to him the purposes of grace which he had there conceived towards him.

Thirdly, The great ordinance of the gospel-ministry, which God hath set up in the church, on purpose to treat with sinners upon a peace, speaks his deep affection to the work. One would have thought it had been enough to print his thoughts and purposes of mercy in the Scripture, though he had done no more. Princes, when they put out a statute or a law, expect all their subjects would enquire after it, and do not send one to every town, whose office shall be to give notice thereof, and persuade people to submit to it; yet this the great God doth; the minister's work from one end of the year to the other, what is it but to beseech sinners to be reconciled to God? And in this observe,

First, The persons he sends to preach. Not Angels, foreigners to our nature; who though they wish us well, yet are not so intimately concerned in man's fall, as to give them the advantage of preaching with those melting bowels that God would have them filled with, who go on this errand. No, he sends men, with whom he may converse familiarly, creatures of like passions; whose nature puts them under the same depravation, temptation, and condemnation, with ourselves; who can from the acquaintance they have with their own hearts, tell us the baseness of ours; from the fire of God's wrath which hath scorched them for their sins, tell us the desert of ours, and danger we are in by reason of them; as also from the sweet sense that the taste of God's love in Christ hath left on their souls, can commend the chear and feast they invite us to upon their

own knowledge. Did not God, think you, desire good speed to his embassage, when he chose such to carry it?

Secondly, Observe the qualifications required in those he employs as Ambassadors to offer peace to sinners, 2 *Tim.* ii. 24. *The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.* O! how careful is God, that nothing should be in the preacher to prejudice the sinner's judgment, or harden his heart against the offer of his grace? If the servant be proud and hasty, how shall they know the master is meek and patient? God would have them do nothing to make the breach wider, or hinder a happy close betwixt him and them. A froward peevish messenger is no friend to him that sends him. Sinners are wooed into Christ by heart-melting exhortations.

Thirdly, Look into the commission God gives his ambassadors, and still his heart appears in the business. Whether you consider the largeness of it on the one hand, or the strictness of it on the other. *First,* the largeness of it, *Go and preach,* (saith Christ) *the Gospel to every creature.* Make no difference, rich or poor; great sinners or little, old sinners or young; offer peace to all that will but repent and believe, bid as many come as will; here is room for all that come. *Again,* The strictness of it on the other hand. O! what a solemn charge have they of delivering their message faithfully? *Paul* trembles at the thoughts of loitering: *Wo unto me if I preach not.* What an argument doth Christ use (fetched from his heart) to persuade *Peter* to be careful: *If thou lovest me, feed my sheep.* As if he had said, *Peter,* thou now art in tears for thy cowardice in denying me, thou hast yet one way left, for all thy unkindness, to demonstrate thy love to me, and that is by feeding my sheep; do this, and trouble not thyself for that. Christ shews more care of his sheep, than of himself.

Fourthly, The joy God expresseth when poor sinners come into the offer of peace.

Joy is the highest testimony can be given to our complacency in any thing or person; love or joy is as fuel to the fire; if love lay little fuel of desires on the heart, then the flame of joy that comes thence will not be great. Now God's joy is great in pardoning poor sinners that come in; therefore his affection is great in the offer thereof. It is made

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the very motive that prevails with God to pardon sinners, *Because he delighteth in mercy*, Micah vii. 18. *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, for he delighteth in mercy.* God doth all this, *because he delighteth in mercy* Ask why the fisher stands all night with his angle in the river; he will tell you, because he delights in the sport. Well, you now know the reason why God stands so long waiting on sinners, months, years, preaching to them; it is that he may be gracious in pardoning them, and in that act delight himself. Princes very often pardon traitors, to please others more than themselves, or else it would never be done; but God doth it chiefly to delight and glad his own merciful heart. Hence, the business Christ came about (which was no other but to reconcile sinners to God), it is called the *pleasure of the Lord*, Isaiah liii. 10. The Lord takes such joy and pleasure in this, that whereas other fathers, whose love to their children sinks infinitely beneath any comparison with the love of God to Christ, mourn at the death of their children (and most of all when violent), God he takes content in his Son's death; yea, had the chief hand in procuring of it; and that with infinite complacency; *It pleased the Lord to bruise him*; and what joy could God take in his Son's death, but as it made way for him and his poor creatures that were fallen out, and at open war one against another, to fall in again by a happy accord? And now speak, O sinner, if God doth so affectionately desire to be reconciled with thee, doth it not much more behove thee to embrace the peace, than it doth him to offer it?

SECT. IV.

Fourthly, There is but one thing more I would desire thee, sinner, to consider, and then I leave thee to thy choice. Consider what thou dost, when thou refusest peace with God. Determinations of war or peace use to be the result of the most grave counsels and mature deliberation possible. Think, and think again, what thou dost, before thou breakest off the treaty of peace, lest thou makest work for repentance, when it will be bootless. But lest thou shouldst not

be so faithful to God and thy own soul, as to give thy conscience liberty to speak freely in this matter, I shall do it for thee, and tell thee what thou dost when thou rejectest peace. Thou justifiest thy former hostilities against God, and declarest that thou wilt vouch what thou hast done, let God right himself as well as he can. He that refuseth a pardon, either denieth he hath done wrong, or which is worse, stands to defend it; thou hadst as good say, thou desirest not to be friends with God, but hast a mind to perpetuate the feud betwixt God and thee; like *Amilcar*, who was such an enemy to *Rome*, that when he died, he made his son *Hannibal* heir to his hatred against them. Is it not enough thou hast fought so many battles on earth against thy Maker, but wilt thou keep the quarrel up in another world also, where there is no more possibility to put an end to it, than to eternity itself? Thou throwest the greatest scorn upon God, that it is possible for a creature to do; as if God's love and hatred were such inconsiderable things, that they need not, when cast into the scale of thy thoughts, preponderate thee either way, the one to move thy desire, or the other thy fear. In a word, thou consentest to thy own damnation, and desperately flingest thyself into the mouth of God's flaming wrath, which gapes in the threatening upon thee. God is under an oath to procure thy destruction, if thou diest in this mind, which God forbid. I have read of a foolish, I may say cruel, law among the *Lacedemonians*, that none should tell his neighbour any ill news befallen him; but every one should be left in process of time to find it out themselves. Many among us I think would be content, if there were such a law, that might tie up minister's mouths from scaring them with their sins, and the miseries that attend their unreconciled state: the most are more careful to run from the discourse of their misery, than to get out of the danger of it; are more offended with the talk of Hell, than troubled for that sinful state that shall bring them thither. But, alas! when shall we shew our love to the souls of sinners, if not now? seeing that in Hell there remains no more offices of love to be done for them. Hell is a pest-house, that we may not write so much on the door of it, as, *Lord have mercy upon them* that are in it; nay, they who now pray for their salvation, and weep over their condition, must then with Christ vote for their damnation, and rejoice in it; though they

they be their own fathers, husbands, and wives they see there. O! now bethink yourselves before the heart of God and man be hardened against you.

CHAP. VI.

Four Directions by way of Counsel to Sinners, yet in an unreconciled State how they may be at Peace with God.

Quest. BUT how may a poor sinner be at peace with God?

SECT. I.

Answ. First, See and be sensible of the feud and enmity that at present stands.

First, As to the reality of the thing; that there is indeed a quarrel which God hath against thee, wherever thou goest; an angry God is at thy back, and his wrath like a big-bellied cloud, hangs full of curses over thy head, ready every moment to empty upon it. There is need of pressing this; for though it is ordinary for men to confess themselves sinners; yet most are loth to disparage their state so far, as to rank themselves among the enemies of God; no, they hope God and they are good friends for all this. Like thieves, they will confess some little matter, but they will have a care of letting fall any thing that may hazard their necks; sinner is a favourable word; who lives and sins not? that they will grant: but to be in a state of enmity, and under the wrath of God; this scares them too much, and brings them too near the sight of the gallows (the seat of Hell) which are due to that state; and, therefore, when prest thus far, as the *Jews* desired *Rabshakah* (when he scared them with the dreadful things that would befal them, if they stood out against the king his master, *that he would not speak in the Jews language*

guage in the hearing of the people, Isaiah xxxvi. 11. (for fear of affrighting them) but in a foreign tongue: So sinners desire those that deal plainly with them, that they would not speak so broad in the hearing of their conscience, which they are afraid should know the worst. But if thou lovest thy own soul, make a true representation of thy state to thyself. O! what folly it is for a man to lose his cause by concealing the badness of it.

Secondly, Labour to bring thyself under the sense of the miserable condition thou art in: Hadst thou the empire of the world, and all nations creeping to thy foot, as once the beasts did to *Adam,* and a lease as long as *Methuselah*'s life twice told, to enjoy it in, without the interposition of one cloud all the while, to darken the glory of this thy royalty; yet, supposing thee to be one, to whom God is an enemy; I would chuse to be the worm under thy foot, the toad in the ditch, sooner than thy miserable self in thy palace. One thought of thy approaching death, and eternal misery in store for thee, will let out all the joy of thy present happiness. This makes the great ones of the world, indeed all unreconciled sinners, high and low, to go to their graves. Alas! if they should but look forward whether they are going, their hearts would soon be at their mouths for want of this breastplate; a comfortable persuasion of their peace made with God. Go therefore (as a poor malefactor condemned to die would do), shut thyself up from all thy old flattering companions, that would still silence thy miserable soul in a senseless security (the cradle which the Devil rocks souls in to their utter destruction): Let none of them come to thee, but send for those that dare be faithful to thee, and, like *Samuel,* tell thee every word that God saith against thee, and conceal nothing; yea, read thy doom with thy own eyes in the word, and take thy condemnation from God's own mouth, and not man's: *There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God;* muse on it, till it cleaves to thy soul, like a drawing plaister to a sore, and brings out the very core of thy pride and carnal confidence, which hardened thy heart from all sense of thy condition, by which time the anguish of thy own spirit (seeing the streights thou art brought into) will prompt thee to desire peace with God, and that is that which God waits for to hear drop from thee, as much as *Benhadad*'s servants did for a word from *Ahab*'s mouth.

SECT.

SECT. II.

Secondly, Look thou propoundest right ends in thy desire of reconciliation with God. Nothing more hateful to God or man than falsehood and treachery in treaties of peace; and yet some men can have words as smooth as butter in their mouths, and war is in their hearts at the same time, *Psalm* lv. 21. O! take heed of any hollowness of heart in thy enquiry for peace; when found out, as it must needs be, except God's eye fails him, which is impossible, it will exceedingly harden the heart of God against thee. God never repented of any he pardoned or took up into the chariot of peace with him; because he was never deceived by any; as men are, who often make peace with those that prove at last false brethren, and give them cause to wish they had never known them. *Joab* kissed *Amasa*, but he took no heed to the sword in *Joab*'s hand. God looks to the heart, and sees what is in its hand; be sure thou standest clear in thy own thoughts, as to the ends thou aimest at. It is lawful for thee to look to thy own safety; God will give thee leave to look to thyself; this thou mayest, and yet not neglect him: But never was any peace true or sure where only self-love made it; whether it be with God, or between man and man. Thou seest thou art undone, if thou keepest thy old side, and therefore thou seekest peace with God, as the Kings that served *Hadarezer, when they saw he was smitten before Israel, they made peace with Israel* themselves, 2 *Sam.* x. 19. Well, this may be allowed thee to come over to God, because his is the surer side. Never any made peace with God but this argument weighed much with them. If *Jacob* could have been safe at home, he had never fled to *Laban;* all are fired out of their holds before they yield to God. But take heed this be not all, or the chief, thou aimest at; this thou mayest do, and hate God as much as ever; like those who are said to *yield feignedly to David*'s victorious arms, because no help for it. A man taken in a storm, may be forced to his greatest enemy for shelter, without any change of his heart, or better thoughts of him than before. Two things therefore thou must look to have in thy eye, above thy own self-preservation.

First,

First, The honour of God. Hence oft the Saint's prayers are prest with an argument from God, as well as themselves, and their own misery, *Psalm* lxxix. 9. *Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy Name, and deliver us, and purge away our sins for thy name's sake.* Certainly, if God could not be more glorified in our peace and reconciliation, than in our death and damnation, it were a wicked thing to desire it. But God hath cleared this up to us, that he is no loser by acts of mercy. In this lies the greatest revenue of his crown, or else he would not love *mercy, rather than sacrifice;* God is free to chuse what suits his own heart best, and most conduceth to the exalting of his great name; and he delights more in the mercy shewn to one, than in the blood of all the damned that are made a sacrifice to his justice. And indeed he had a higher end in their damnation than their suffering; and that was the enhancing of the glory of his mercy in his saved ones. This is the beautiful piece God takes delight in, and the other but the shadow to it. Then thou art in a fit disposition to pray for peace, and mayest go with encouragement, when thy heart is deeply affected with the honour that will accrue to God by it. It is an argument God will not deny. *This* (said *Abigal* to *David) shall be no grief to thee, nor offence of heart unto my Lord*, 1 Sam. xxv. she meant, he should never have cause to repent that he was kept from shedding blood. Thus mayest thou plead with God, and say, O Lord, when I shall with Saints and Angels be praising thy pardoning grace in Heaven, it will not grieve thee, that thy mercy kept thee from shedding my blood, damning my soul in Hell. But now it is evident, that many who seem to seek peace, and pursue it too very strongly, yet do not take over much care for God's honour in the thing. Because they are earnest with God to pardon them in a way that were to him dishonourable; pardoned they would be, though wholly ignorant of God and Christ: they would have God to be at peace with them, while they are enemies to him. Like a thief at the bar, he would have the judge spare his life right or wrong, legally or illegally: Doth this wretch consider the honour of the Judge? or that sinner, who, so he be saved, cares not how unrighteous God is in the act of mercy? O! deceive not yourselves, poor souls, God will not make war between his own attributes to make peace with you.

Secondly,

Secondly, You must desire to be reconciled to God, that you may have fellowship with God. Certainly a soul sensible what the loss of communion with God is, counts it hath not all its errand done, when it hath naked peace given it; should God say, soul I am friends with thee; I have ordered thou shalt never go to Hell; here is a discharge under my hand, that thou shalt never be arrested for my debt more; but as for any fellowship with me, or fruition of me, thou canst expect none: I have done with thee, for ever being acquainted more with thee. Certainly the soul would take little joy in her peace; were the fire out as to positive torments, yet a Hell would be left in the dismal darkness which the soul would sit under for want of God's presence. *Absalom* knew no middle condition that could please him, betwixt seeing the King his father's face, and being killed, 2 *Sam.* xiv. 32. *Let me see the King's face, and if there be any iniquity in me, let him kill me.* If I be not worthy to enjoy my father's love and presence, neither do I desire to live; whereas a wicked heart seeks reconciliation without any longing after fellowship with God; like the traitor, if the King will but pardon and save him from the gallows, he is ready to promise him, never to trouble him at Court; it is his own life, not the King's favour he desires.

SECT. III.

Thirdly, Throw down thy rebellious arms, and humbly submit to his mercy. God will not so much as treat with thee so long as thy sword is in thy hand: *Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord*, Isaiah i. 18. Mark when the parley begins; *put away the evil of your doings*, ver. 16. Now come and treat with God about a peace.

First, God is a great God, and it doth not become his sovereignty to treat his sorry creature on equal terms, as a King doth with his fellow Prince, who if he cannot have peace on his own terms, is able probably to revenge himself by force of arms: But as a mighty King with his rebel subject, whom he hath fast bound with chains in prison, and can at pleasure hang up for his treason. The great God will have thee know that. Let those capitulate, who can retire to their strength, and live without peace: But as for the poor

sinner, thou dost not, I hope, think thou art in a capacity to meet God in the field, or to thrive by this trade of war against God. No, thy only way is to conquer him upon thy knee, to lay thy neck at his foot, and say, Lord I put my life in thy hands, chusing rather to die by the hand of thy justice, than to continue fighting against thy mercy. Now, poor soul, thou art in the right path that leads to peace. *Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up,* James iv. 10. That soul shall not long be out of his arms that is prostrate at his foot; but though the high and lofty one can stoop to take up a penitent sinner into the arms of his pardoning mercy, yet he will not debase his sovereignty to treat with a wretch that stands to his arms, and stouts it out with him. There is one red letter in God's name, *he will by no means clear the guilty,* Exod. xxxiv.

Secondly, The holy nature of God requires this; sin is that which made the breach, and caused God to take arms against his creature; how canst thou rationally think to make thy peace with him, and keep this in thy bosom? God is willing to be reconciled with thee, but wilt thou have him be at peace with thy sin also? Is it not enough to be justified from thy sin, but wouldst thou have God betray his own honour, by justifying thee in thy sin? What security canst thou give to God of thy love to him, if thou wilt not renounce that which is the only thing that seeks his life? *Peccatum est decidium.* As long as the traitor is in favour within, God will not raise his siege, or hear a peace without. They cannot reign together; chuse which you will have of them; and be not so far deluded as to think it is enough to send thy lust out of the way for a while, as Princes use to do their favourites in a popular commotion to please the people, and then call for them home, when the hubbub is over. No, God will not be thus mocked. See how the promise runs, *Isaiah* lv. 7. *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will abundantly pardon.* See how cautious God is in the terms: no corner is left for the least sin to skulk and save its life in; *He must forsake:* that implies,

First, A deliberate choice in the soul, he does it freely; some men's sins forsake them; *the unclean spirit goes out,* and is not driven out; occasions to sin cease, or bodily ability to execute the commands of sin is wanting; here is no forsaking

forsaking sin in all this; but to break from it with a holy indignation and resolution when temptation is most busy, and strength most active, now (as *David* said, when his enemy compassed him as bees) in the name of the Lord to rebel and resist them, this is to forsake. This is the *Encomium of Moses,* he forsook the court when he was grown up; not for age as *Barzillai*, but when his blood was warm in his veins. A man doth not forsake his wife, when he is detained from her in prison, but when he puts her away, and gives her a bill of divorce.

Secondly, To forsake sin, is to leave it without any thought reserved of returning to it again. Every time a man takes a journey from home about business, we do not say he hath forsaken his house, because he meant when he went out to come to it again. No; but when we see a man leave his house, lock up his doors, and take up his abode in another, never to dwell there more; here is a man hath indeed forsaken his house. It were strange to find a drunkard so constant in the exercise of that sin, but sometimes you may find him sober; and yet a drunkard he is, as well as if he was then drunk. Every one hath not forsaken his trade, that we see now and then in their holy-day suit; then the man forsakes his sin when he throws it from him, and bolts the door upon it, with a purpose never to open more to it, *Hosea* xiv. 8. *Ephraim shall say, what have I to do any more with Idols?*

Again, Observe, before pardon can be sealed, he must forsake, not this sin or that, but the whole law of sin. *Let the wicked forsake his way.* A traveller may step from one path to another, and still go on the same way of sin, leave a dirty, deep, and rugged path, for one more smooth and even: So many finding some gross sins uneasy, and too toilsome to their awakened consciences, step into a more cleanly path of civility: But, alas! poor creatures, all they get is to go a little more easily and cleanly to Hell than their beastly neighbours; but he forsakes the way of sin, that turns out of the whole road: In a word, thou must forsake the blindest path of all in sin's way, that which lies behind the hedge, in the thoughts of the heart, *and the unrighteous his thoughts?* or else thou knockest in vain at God's door for pardoning mercy, and therefore, poor soul, forsake all or none: save one lust, and you lose one soul; if men mean to go to Hell,

why are they so mannerly? this halving with sin is ridiculous. Art thou afraid of this sin, and not of a less, which hinders thy peace, and procures thy damnation as sure, only not with so much distraction to thy drowsy conscience at present? This is as ridiculous as it was with him who, being to be hanged, desired that he might by no means go through such a street to the gallows, for fear of the plague that was there. O! consider but the equity, the honourableness of the terms that God offers peace upon: What lust is so sweet or profitable, that is worth burning in Hell for? *Darius*, when he fled before *Alexander*, that he might run the faster out of danger, *threw away his massy Crown from his head which hindered him;* and is any lust so precious in thy eye, that thou canst not leave it behind thee, rather than fall into the hands of God's justice? But so sottish is foolish man, that a wise Heathen could take notice of it; *Ea sola emi putamus, pro quibus pecuniam solvimus; ea gratuita vocamus, pro quibus nos-ipsos impendimus, &c. Sen. Epist.* 42. We think we only buy what we part with money for; and as for those things we pay ourselves, our souls for, these we think we have for nothing; as if the man were not more worth than his money.

SECT. IV.

Fourthly, Having been faithful to follow the preceding directions, thou now art in a fair way to effect thy much-desired enterprize; go to the throne of grace, and humbly present thy request to God, that he would be at peace with thee; yea, carry with thee a faith that thou shalt find him more ready to embrace the motion, than thou to make it; only take heed what thou makest thy plea to move God, and and where thou placest thy confidence; not in thy repentance or reformation; this were to play the merchant with God; know he expects not a chapman to truck with him, but an humble suppliant to be suitor to him. Nor his absolute mercy (as ignorant souls do), this is to take hold of the sword by the blade, and not by the hilt; such will find their death and damnation from that mercy, which they might be saved by, if they did take hold of it as God offers it them, and that is *through Christ*, Isaiah xxxvii. 5. *Let him*

him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me. And where lies God's saving strength, but in Christ? he hath *laid strength upon this mighty one, able to save to the uttermost all that come to God.* It is not God's absolute power or mercy will help thee, but his Covenant, strength, and mercy, is in Christ. Take hold of Christ, and thou hast hold of God's arm, he cannot strike the soul that holds thereby. Indeed, God's essential goodness is a powerful argument to persuade the poor soul to rely upon the promise in Christ for pardon, when he considers that God who promiseth peace to the believer, is a God whose very nature is mercy itself; but had there been no promise to engage this mercy to poor sinners through Christ, this would have been but cold comfort, to have believed God was good. It is no blot to the almightiness of his power, that he doth not all he can. He could make more worlds (if he was so pleased) than he hath done; but we have no ground to believe he will, neither is he the less Almighty, because he does not; so he could have saved the fallen Angels with the sons of lost man: He is not scanted in mercy for such a design, if he had thought it fit; but having passed no promise for such a thing, the essential goodness of God affords the Devils but little relief, or hope that he will do it; and yet God continues good. And for aught I can find out of the word, they among the sons of men, who (either through simple ignorance of the gospel, or prejudice, which their proud reason hath taken up against the way it chalks out for making our peace with God, through Christ's satisfaction) do neglect Christ, or scornfully reject this his satisfaction, and betake themselves to the absolute goodness and mercy of God, as the plea which they will make at Christ's bar for their pardon and salvation, shall find as little benefit from it as the Devils themselves. Suppose a Prince should make a law, by which he will govern his people, and takes a solemn oath to keep close to it: could a malefactor that is condemned by this law to die, expect any relief by appealing from the law to the mercy and goodness of the Prince's nature? I confess some have sped and saved their lives by taking this course: But it hath been, because either the Prince was imprudent in making the law, or unfaithful in keeping his oath: Neither of which can without blasphemy be imputed to God infinitely wise and holy. He

hath

hath enacted a law, called the law of faith, for the saving poor sinners through Christ, and is under an oath to make it good both in the salvation of every one that believes on Christ, and damnation on every one that doth not believe; and to make all sure, hath given Christ an oath to be faithful in his office, who was trusted as Priest to procure redemption, and shall sit as Judge to pronounce the sentence, at the great day, of absolution or condemnation. Take heed, therefore, poor sinner, that thou art not drawn from placing thy entire confidence on Christ the Son of God, both God and man in one person, who laid down his life upon agreement with his Father, to make an atonement for the sin of the world; and now offers thee that blood which then he shed, as a price to carry in the hand of thy faith to the Father for pardon and peace. No, though they should come and call thee from Christ to Christ, from a Christ without thee, to a Christ within thee: As the *Jesuit* doth in the *Quaker*, into whom he is now got: As the Friars of old were wont into their hollow images, that they might deliver their lying doctrines out of the mouths of their reputed Saints, and thereby cozen the multitude without any suspicion of their knavery. Just so do the *Jesuits* now-a-days deliver their Popish stuff, out of the mouths of the *Quakers*. A design so much more dangerous, as it is more cunning than the other; there is too much light shed abroad, for that old puppet-play to take; but though men are too wise to lend an ear to a block or a stone, yet holiness in a living Saint commands such reverence, that the Devil hath ever found, that under this cloak, and will to the end of the world, he can pass least suspected. Well, when he comes to call thee from a Christ without thee, to a Christ within thee, strip the doctrine out of its pleasing phrase; and, in plain *English*, he calls thee from trusting in the righteousness of Christ, wrought by him for thee, and by faith to be made thine for thy justification before God, to an inherent work of grace or righteousness wrought by the spirit of God in thee for thy sanctification and renovation, called sometimes the *new creature*, and *Christ within us*. Now, hadst thou not made a change, if thou hast let go thy hold on Christ, who is thy righteousness, to rely on a creature, and that a weak one too, God knows, full of so many imperfections, that thy conscience (except given over to believe a lie) can tell, that it is but a vein of gold imbased with much

much more earth and dross, which shall never be quite clean till put into the refining pot of the grave; look to thyself, Christian, it is matter of life and death; prize Christ's grace within thee thou must; yea, thou hast none in thee, if thou dost not value it above all the mountains of gold the world hath; but trust not to this Christ, or grace of Christ within thee for life and salvation; for now thou prizest the creature above God, and settest *Christ within thee* to fight *with Christ without thee.* The bride doth well highly to esteem her husband's picture, which he hath given her, especially if very like him, and most of all, if drawn by his own hand: But it were very ridiculous if he should dote on that so far as to slight her husband, and when she wants money, clothes, or the like, to go not to her husband, but to the picture he gave her. The Saint's grace is called Christ within him, because it is his picture, and makes the Saint so like Christ: This for the resemblance it bears to the holiness Christ himself thy husband, who, with the finger of his own spirit, drew it on thy soul, deserves highly to be valued: But what a dotage were it for thee to turn thy back on the Lord Jesus Christ of himself, to whom by faith thou art married; and when thou wantest pardon and comfort, wouldst have Heaven and happiness, to expect these, not from Christ, but thy grace? O! will Christ thank thee for honouring his creature to the dishonour of his person?

CHAP. VII.

An Exhortation to such as are at Peace with God, in six Particulars.

Use 2. A FEW words by way of improvement, to you whose peace is concluded with Christ.

First, Hast thou peace with God? Look *thou makest no peace with sin.* This broke thy peace with God; now let thy peace with God begin a war with that, never to end. Thou

Thou canst not sure forget the inestimable wrong and damage thou hast suffered by it; every moment's sweet enjoyment of God (whose bosom love thou hast now happily recovered) will help to keep the fire of wrath and revenge burning in thy heart against that cursed enemy, that kept thee so long thence. God hath now won thy heart (I hope) by his pardoning mercy, dearly to love him for his love to thee. How canst thou with patience see any lust come braving forth from thy heart, defying thy God and his grace in thee? *Paul*'s spirit was stirred in him at *Athens*, to see God dishonoured by the superstition of others; and is not thine, to see him reproached by the pride, unbelief, and other sins that do it from under thy own soul's room? Oh! Christian, meditate some noble exploit against it; now the more to steel thy heart, and harden it against all relenting towards it; carry the blood and wounds of thy Saviour into the field with thee, in the hand of thy faith; the sight of these will certainly enrage thy heart against the lusts that stabbed and killed him, more than the bloody garments of *Cæsar* (held up by *Anthony)* did the *Roman* citizens against his murderers. Oh! see how cruelly they used the Lord of glory, and where they laid him in an ignominious grave, and that fastened with a seal, stronger than that which man set to it (the curse due to us sinners), never possible to have been broke up by any less than his own Almighty arm. And now, Christian, shall these murderers, not of man, but of God (for it was the blood of God that was shed) escape that vengeance which God would have done with thy hand upon them? wherefore else doth he leave them any life in thy soul, but that thou shouldst have the opportunity of shewing thy love to Christ, by running thy dagger of mortification into their heart? *Alexander* got no more honour by his great victories in the field, than by his piety to his dead father *Philip;* whose bloody death he avenged as soon as he came into the throne, slaying the murderers upon his father's tomb. O! shew thy piety to thy dear Saviour, by falling upon thy cursed lusts, and that speedily; never rest till thou hast had their blood that shed his: till thou dost this, thou art consenting to all the cruelty that was executed on him; this is the *honour* which all the *Saints shall have,* and therefore the *two-edged Sword of the Spirit* is put into their hands, that they may execute the vengeance written.

Secondly,

Secondly, Is God reconciled to thee? Be thou willing to be reconciled to any that have wronged thee. Thy God expects it at thy hands. Thou hast reason to pardon thy brother for God's sake, who pardoned thee for his pure mercy's sake. Thou in pardoning dost no more than thou owest thy brother; but God pardoned thee when he did owe thee nothing but wrath. Thy God stooped low when he reconciled himself to thee; yea, sought it at thy hands, and no dishonour neither to the high and lofty one. Nay, by implacableness and revenge thou debasest thyself the most thou canst do; for by these thou stoopest not only beneath thy heaven-born nature, but human; it is the Devil, and none but such as bear his image that are implacable enemies. *The wisdom from above is easily to be intreated.* When we see a child furious and revengeful, that comes of merciful parents, we use to say, we wonder of whom he got his currish, churlish disposition, *his father and mother were not so;* who learns thee, O Christian, to be so revengeful, and unmerciful? thou hast it not of thy heavenly father I am sure.

Thirdly, Is God at peace with thee? hath he pardoned thy sins? never then distrust his providence for any thing thou wantest as to this life: Two things well weighed, would help thy faith in this particular. *First*, When he pardoned thy sins, he did more for thee than this comes to, and did he give the greater, and will he grudge thee the less? Thou hast Christ in thy pardon bestowed on thee; *How shall he not with him also freely give thee all things?* Rom. viii. 32. When the father gives his child the whole orchard, it were folly to question whether he gives him this apple or that in it. *All things are yours, and you are Christ's*, 1 Cor. iii. 22. The reconciled soul hath a right to all. The whole world is his; but as a father, though he settles a fair estate on his child, yet lets him hold no more in his own hand, than he can well manage; so God gives believers a right to all the comforts of this life, but proportions so much out to them for their actual use, as his infinite wisdom sees meet; so that he that hath less than another in his present possession, ought to impute it not to any want of love or care in God, but to the wisdom both of his love and care, that gives stock as we have grace to work it out; we pour the wine according as the cup is; that which but fills one, would be half lost, if poured into a less. *Secondly*, Consider how God gives

these temporals to those that he denies peace and pardon to. Though within a while they are to be tumbled into Hell, yet while on earth his providence reacheth unto them, and doth God feed these *Ravens*, unclean birds? doth he cause his rain to drop fatness on their fields, and will he neglect thee thinkest thou, that art a believer? If the Prince feeds a traitor in prison, surely the child in his house shall not starve. In a word (to allude to that, *Luke* xii. 28.) if God in his providence so abounds to the ungodly, as we see he doth, if he clothes this grass, for to this the wicked may be well compared, which is to day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into Hell's burning oven, *how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?*

Fourthly, Art thou at peace with God? O then shew no discontent at any cross or affliction that God visiteth thee withal. If he hath visited thee first with his mercy, thou hast reason to bid him kindly welcome, when he comes to visit thee with his rod. Thou hast sugar by thee now to sweeten thy bitter cup; when the Prophet *Samuel* came to *Bethlehem*, it is said, *The Elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, comest thou peaceably, and he said peaceably*, 1 Sam. xiv. 4. Thus when God comes with some heavy affliction to us, it may make us tremble till we know what it comes for, whether peaceably or no. Now, if thou art at peace with God, the fear is over; it cannot but come peaceably: Thou mayest conclude it comes on mercy's errand; what condition canst thou, O pardoned soul, be in, that should part thee and the joy of thy peace with God? Is it the wrath of man thou fearest? possibly thou hast many enemies, and those great ones, and their wrath as great as such can express. Let it be so; is God among them or no? Doth God let out their wrath in his wrath against thee? If not, thou exceedingly wrongest God, if overmuch troubled, and thyself also. Thou wrongest God by not sanctifying his name in thy heart, whose mercy is able to secure thee from their wrath. If God be for us, who can be against us? *Rom.* viii. 31. Thou needest not fear them, though an army of them about thee. And thou wrongest thyself also; how indeed can we wrong God and not ourselves? so long as thou art under the power of such a fear from man's wrath, thou canst never have the taste of God's love in its true sweetness.

Again,

Again, Art thou sick, poor, and what not beside? may not God reasonably expect, that reconciling mercy should stop thy mouth from whispering any word of discontent against him, and prevent all envious glances of thy eye at the prosperity of the wicked? Remember man, that thou canst say one great word, which they cannot, in the midst of all their pomp and worldly glory, *Though I lie here poor and sick, yet I am through mercy at peace with God.* This well thought on, would soon change both your notes. The joy of the prosperous sinner into bitter mourning, and thy sorrow (Christian) into joy. The Lady *Elizabeth* (afterwards *England*'s gracious Queen) hearing a simple milk-maid sing merrily in the field, when she, poor Princess (being then a sorrowful prisoner) had more mind to sigh than sing (though served at the same time in state as a Princess) said, *that poor maid was happier than herself.* And so would the sinner, how great and high soever in the world, think the poorest Christian, with his rags and penury, a better man, and happier in his liberty, and peace with God, than himself, in all his grandeur and worldly gaities, did he but consider that in the midst of all these he is a prisoner, not to man, but God, out of whose hands there is no escaping.

Fifthly, Comfort thyself with this; that thou who art at peace with God now on earth, shalt feast with God ere long in Heaven, *Rom.* viii. 30. *And whom he justified, them also he glorified.* And do not think this news too good or great to be true. Here is a word for it you see. Heaven's number of glorified Saints, is made up of justified sinners. Neither more nor less of the one, than of the other. Art thou justified by faith, by which thou hast peace with God? then lose not thy privilege, but rejoice with thy fellow Saints, *in the hope of the glory of God.* It is before thee; every day brings thee nearer to it, and nothing can hinder thee of it at last; *not thy sins* themselves, and I know thou fearest them most. He that paid thy great score at thy conversion, will find mercy enough in his heart surely, to pass by thy dribbling debts, which thy own infirmity, and Satan's subtilty, have run thee into. Thou wert an enemy when God thought of doing the first; but now thou art a friend, and this will oblige him to do the second, that he may not lose his disbursement in the first: yea, provision is made by God in his method of our salvation for the one, as strongly as for

the other. Christ died to make us, (enemies to God), friends with him; and he lives now to bring God and us, being thus made friends, to meet in one Heaven together. Yea, the Apostle gives the advantage to this of the two for our faith to triumph in. *For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life*, Rom v. 10. As if the Apostle had said, Can you believe that God hath taken you that were enemies into a state of peace and favour with himself? Surely then you must needs find it easier for your faith to argue from reconciliation to salvation, than from hostility and enmity, to pardon and peace; could Christ procure the one by his death, when he was weakest, as I may so say, and at the lowest descent of his humiliation? How much more shall he in the height of his Court-favour in Heaven, where he hath all power given him, be able to save those whom he hath reconciled.

Sixthly, Art thou at peace with God? knowing the goodness of God to thyself, do thou woo others to embrace the same mercy. The house is not so full, but yet *there is room*, Luke xiv. 22. Hast thou none thou lovest so well, as to wish them thy happiness? Haply thou hast a carnal husband lying by thy side, children of thy womb or loins, neighbours in whose company thou art every day almost, and all these in an unreconciled state, who, should they die as now they live, their precious souls are lost for ever, and yet themselves think no more of this misery coming on them, than the silly sheep doth what the butcher is doing, when he is whetting his knife to cut her throat. Well, the less merciful they are to their own souls, the more need there is thou shouldst shew thy compassion towards them. We take most care of those that are least capable of taking care for themselves. If thou hadst a friend sick in the house, and of such a disease he could not help himself, should he die rather than thou wouldst look after him? If a child, condemned to die, though he did himself not mind getting a pardon, yet surely thou wouldst run to obtain it, rather than see him end his days so shamefully. In a word, didst thou but know that thy next neighbour had an intention to injure himself, and for that end had locked himself up in a room, wouldst thou not bestir thee to break up the door, rather than the man shouldst thus miscarry; But alas, where is the holy violence

violence that is used to save poor souls? Parents, husbands, neighbours, they can see their relations going to Hell before their eyes; and who saith to them, why do you so? O for the Lord's sake be more merciful to the souls of others. Thou hast found a feast, let not any that are near thee starve for want of knowledge, where it is to be had; go and invite all thou canst see to God's house; so did *David,* Psal. xxxiv. 8. *O taste and see that the Lord is good.* Thou needest not fear a chiding from God for sending him more guests, he complains he hath no more; *Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life,* John v. 40. He threatens those that keep sinners off from making their peace with him, by flattering them with a false one, called a *strengthening of the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life,* Ezek. xiii. 22. O how acceptable a work then must it needs be to woo souls to Christ? The merchant is not angry for sending a customer into his warehouse, that will buy what he hath taken so much cost and travail to get that he may sell; nor will the physician blame any for bringing a patient to him, by whose cure he may let the world know his skill. This is the great design Christ hath, and in particular prayed for, John xvii. 21. *That the world might believe that he was sent of God;* what aims he at in the gathering in of souls by the grace of the gospel, but *to take out a people* from the heap of sinners *for his name*; Acts xv. 14. that is, cull out a number, in shewing mercy to whom he might exalt his own name gloriously.

CHAP. VIII.

That Peace of Conscience is a blessing to be obtained from the Gospel, and only the Gospel, with a double demonstration thereof.

WE come now to the second kind of peace, and that is peace of consolation, or peace of conscience; by the former

mer the poor sinner is reconciled to God; by this he comes *anima pacata sibi,* a soul reconciled to itself; since man fell out with God, he could never be truly friends with his own conscience. This second peace is so necessary, that he cannot taste the sweetness of the first, nor indeed of any other mercy without it. This is to the soul what health is to the body; it sugars and sweetens all enjoyments. A suit, though of cloth of gold, sits not easy on a sick man's back: nothing joyous to a distressed conscience. *Moses* brought good news to the distressed *Israelites* in *Egypt,* but it is said, *They hearkened not to him for anguish of spirit,* Exod. vi. 9. *Hannah,* she went up to the festival at *Jerusalem* with her husband, but it is said *she wept and did not eat,* 1 Sam. i. 7. Truly thus the wounded soul goes to the sermon, but doth not eat of the feast, it hears many precious promises, but her ear is shut up from receiving the good news they bring. Tell one in trouble of conscience, here is your dear husband, sweet children, will you not rejoice with them? alas! the throbs such a one feels are so amazing, that he regards these things no more than *Phineas's wife in her sore travail* did the women that joyed her with the birth of a son. Set the most royal feast before such a soul, that ever was on Prince's table, and (poor heart) it had rather go into a corner and weep, than sit and eat of those delicacies. *A wounded spirit who can bear?* yea, who can cure? Some diseases are for their incurableness, called *ludibrium medicorum, The Physician's shame* and reproach. To be sure this spiritual trouble of an accusing conscience puts all the world to shame for their vain attempts. Many have attempted to conjure this evil spirit out of their own bosoms and others; but have found it at last to leap upon them, and prevail against them, as the *evil spirit,* Acts xix. 14. *did by the Sons of Sceva.*

Now peace of conscience is the blessing of the gospel, and only of the gospel: conscience knows Jesus, and the gospel of Jesus; these and none else it will obey. Two particulars consider will demonstrate this truth. *First,* If we considered what is the argument that pacifies and satisfies conscience. *Secondly,* What the power and strength that is required to apply this argument so close and home to the conscience, as to quiet and fully satisfy it, both these will be found in the gospel, and only in the gospel.

SECT.

SECT. I.

First, Let us enquire what is the argument that is able to pacify conscience, when thoroughly awakened. Now to know this, we must enquire, what is the cause of all those convulsions of horror and terror with which the conscience of men are at any time so sadly rent and distorted. Now this is sin; could this little word (but great plague) be quite blotted out of men's minds and hearts, the storm would soon be hushed, and the soul become a pacific sea, quiet and smooth, without the least wave of fear to wrinkle the face thereof. This is the *Jonas* which raiseth the storm; the *Achan*, that troubles the soul. Wherever this comes (as was observed of a great Queen in *France*) a war is sure to follow; when *Adam* sinned, he dissolved another manner of jewel than *Cleopatra* did; he drank away this sweet peace of conscience in one unhappy draught, which was worth more to him than the world he lived in. No wonder that it rose in his conscience as soon as it was down his throat: *They saw that they were naked*, Gen. iii. 7. Their consciences reproached them for cursed apostates. That therefore which brings peace to the conscience must prostrate this *Goliah*, throw this troubler overboard, pluck this arrow out of the soul, or else the war will not end, the storm will not down, the wound will not close and heal, which conscience labours under. Now the envenomed head of sin's arrow, that lies burning in conscience, and keeps the poor sinner out of quiet, yea, sometime in insupportable torment and horror, is guilt, whereby the creature is alarmed up to judgment, and bound over to the punishment due to his sin; which being no less than the infinite wrath of the eternal living God, must needs lay the poor creature into a dismal agony, from the fearful expectation thereof in his accusing conscience: he therefore that would use an argument to pacify and comfort a distressed conscience, that lies roasting upon these burning coals of God's wrath, kindled by his guilt, must quench these coals, and bring him to the certain news of this joyful message, that his sins are all pardoned, and God, whose wrath doth so affright him, is undoubtedly, yea, everlastingly reconciled to him. This, and no other argument

ment will stop the mouth of conscience, and bring the creature to true peace with his own thoughts; *Son, be of good cheer* (said Christ to the palsy man) *thy sins be forgiven thee,* Matt. ix. 2. Not be of good cheer, thy health is given thee, (though that he had also) but thy sins are forgiven thee. If a friend should come to a malefactor on his way to the gallows, put a sweet posy into his hands, and bids him be of good cheer, smell on that; alas, this would bring little joy with it to the poor man's heart, who sees the place of execution before him. But if one comes from the Prince with a pardon, which he puts into his hand, and bids him be of good cheer: this, and this only, will reach the poor man's heart, and over-run it with a sudden ravishment of joy. Truly, any thing short of pardoning mercy is as inconsiderable to a troubled conscience, (towards any relieving or pacifying it) as that posy in a dying prisoner's hand would be. Conscience demands as much to satisfy it, as God himself doth to satisfy him for the wrong the creature hath done him. Nothing can take off conscience from accusing, but that which takes off God from threatening. Conscience is God's Serjeant, which he employs to arrest the sinner. Now the Serjeant hath no power to release his prisoner upon any private composition between him and the prisoner, but listens whether the debt be fully paid, or the creditor fully satisfied; then, and not till then, he is discharged of his prisoner. One step further, and we shall bring this demonstration to a head; from what quarter comes this good news that God is reconciled to a poor soul, and that his sins are pardoned? Surely from the gospel of Christ, and no other way. Here alone is the Covenant of peace to be read betwixt God and sinners; here the sacrifice by which this pardon is purchased; here the means discovered by which poor sinners may have benefit of this purchase; and therefore here alone can the accusing conscience find peace. Had the stung *Israelites* looked on any other object, besides the *brazen serpent,* they had never been healed. Neither will the stung conscience find ease with looking upon any, besides Christ in the gospel-promise. The *Levite* and the *Priest,* looked on the wounded man, but would not come near him; there he might have lain and perished in his blood for them. It was the good *Samaritan* that poured oil into his wounds. Not the law, but

but Christ by his blood, bathes and supples, closeth and cureth the wounded conscience. Not a drop of oil in all the world to be got that is worth any thing for this purpose, besides what is provided and laid up in this gospel-vial.

There was abundance of sacrifices offered up in the *Jewish* church; yet put all the blood of those beasts together, which was poured out from first to last in that dispensation, and they were not able to quiet one conscience, or purge away one sin. *The conscience of sin*, as the Apostle phraseth it, *Heb.* x. 2 that is, guilt in their conscience would still have remained unblotted, notwithstanding all these (if severed from what was spiritually signified by them). And the reason is given, ver. 4. *For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.* There is no proportion betwixt the blood of beasts, though it could swell into a river, a sea, and the demerit of the least sin. Man's sin deserves man's death, and that eternal, both of soul and body in Hell. This is the price God hath set upon the head of every sin. Now the death of beasts being so far beneath this price, which divine justice demands as satisfaction for the wrong sin doth him; it must needs be as far beneath pacifying the sinner's conscience, which requires as much to satisfy it, yea, the very same as it doth to satisfy the justice of God. But in the gospel, behold joyful news is brought to the sinner's ears, of a fountain of blood there opened, which, for its preciousness, is as far above the price that divine justice demands for man's sin, as the blood of bulls and beasts was beneath it; and that is, the blood of *Jesus Christ*, who freely poured it upon the cross, and by *it obtained eternal redemption for us,* Heb. ix. This is the door that all true peace and joy comes in to the conscience by; hence we are directed to bottom our confidence, and draw out comfort here, and no where else; Heb. x. 22. *Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience;* mark that, *sprinkled from an evil conscience:* Conscience by office is appointed to judge of a man's actions and state, whether good or bad, pardoned or unpardoned: If the state be good, then it is to acquit and comfort; if evil, then to accuse and condemn him; therefore the evil conscience here, is the *accusing conscience:* From this evil conscience we are said to be sprinkled, that is, freed by the blood of Christ sprinkled on us:

us: It is sin the evil conscience accuseth of, and wrath (the due punishment for that) it condemns the poor creature unto; and be sprinkled with the blood of Christ, is to have the blood of Christ applied to the heart by the spirit for pardon and reconciliation with God. *Sprinkling* in the *Law* did denote the cleansing of the person so sprinkled, from all legal impurities, *Levit.* xiv. 6. yea, the believing soul from all sinful uncleanness by the blood of Christ, which was signified by the blood of those sacrifices. Therefore *David* prays, Psalm li. 7. *Purge me with hyssop, then shall I be clean*; that is, apply the blood of Christ to my troubled conscience (as they with a bunch of hyssop did the blood of the beast into which it was dipped, upon the *Leper* to cleanse him). *Then* (saith he) *I shall be clean;* this sin, which now doth affright my conscience, shall be washed off, and I at peace, as if I had never sinned. To this sprinkling of blood the Holy Ghost alludes, *Heb.* xii. 24. where we are said in the gospel-administration, *To be come to Jesus, the Mediator of a better Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than the blood of Abel;* that is, better things in the conscience. *Abel*'s blood sprinkled in the guilt of it upon *Cain*'s conscience, spake swords and daggers, Hell and damnation; but the blood of Christ sprinkled in the conscience of a poor trembling sinner, speaks pardon and peace. Hence it is called *the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*, 1 Peter iii. 21. An answer supposeth a question; an answer towards God, supposeth a question from God to the creature. Now the question God here is supposed to propound to the poor creature, may be conceived to be this; What canst thou say (who art a sinner, and standest by the curse of my righteous law doomed to death and damnation) why thou shouldst not die the death pronounced against every sinner?

Now the soul that hath heard of Christ, and hearing of him, hath received him by faith into his heart, is the person, and the only person, that can answer this question, so as to satisfy God or himself. Take the answer, as it is formed and fitted for, yea, put into the mouth of every believer, by the Apostle *Paul*, Rom. viii. 34. *Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us*; such an answer this is, that God himself

himself cannot object against; and therefore St. *Paul*, representing all believers, triumphs in the invincible strength thereof against all the enemies of our salvation: *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* ver. 35. and proceeds to challenge in death and Devils, with all their attendants, to come and do their worst against believers, who have got this breast-work about them, and at last he displays his victorious colours, and goes out of the field with this holy confidence, that none (be they what they will) shall ever be able to hurt them, ver. 38, 39. *I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor Angels, nor Principalities, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord;* in him he lodgeth his colours, and lays up all his confidence. But I am afraid I have been too long; if I can be said to be too long on this subject, the richest vein in the whole mine of gospel treasure.

SECT. II.

The second demonstration is taken from the strength and power required to press this argument home to the conscience, so as to satisfy it, and make it acquiesce therein: conscience is a lock that goes hard, though the key fit it (I mean the argument used to comfort it be suitable and strong); yet if this key be in a weak hand, that cannot turn it, as it is when ever a mere creature holds it, conscience will not open; its doubts and fears will not be resolved. No, this must be the work of the spirit, or else it will never be done. Conscience is God's officer; and though the debt be paid in Heaven, yet it will not let the soul go free, till a warrant comes from thence to authorise it. And who can bring this but the spirit of God? so that, as it is not in all their power that are about the poor prisoner to comfort him, till news come from court, what the Prince means to do with him; so here in this case, *When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who can behold him?* Job xxxiv. 29. Now two things will bring this demonstration to a head. *First*, Observe that the gospel only presents the Spirit of God to us under the notion of a comforter, and *secondly*, The admirable fitness and sufficiency of the holy Spirit to pacify and comfort a guilty

troubled conscience: the first will evince, that peace of conscience is no where else to be found but from the gospel; the second will shew, that it is there abundantly to be found.

First, It is the gospel alone that presents the Spirit of God as a comforter to poor sinners; indeed the comforting office of the Spirit is founded on the satisfaction of Jesus Christ. When Christ had shed his blood, and in it laid down upon the nail, the full price of a sinner's peace with God; then at his return to Heaven he prays his Father to send the comforter: Neither could Christ desire this request of his Father, nor his Father grant it to him, but upon the account of this his death, which secures the justice of God from receiving any damage by the comfort which the Spirit carries into the believing sinner's bosom; John xvi. 7. *If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you;* pray mark, the Spirit, as a comforter, stays till Christ goes to Heaven to send him down; and no room for Christ there, till the work was done he came about; and what was that, but by his bloody death to purchase peace with God for poor believing sinners? and now let him come when he will, the Spirit is ready to be sent as a comforter, as soon as he appears in the Heavens with his blood as an intercessor. But whence then had the Old Testament Saints all their peace and comfort, who lived before Christ returned to Heaven; yea, before he took his first journey from Heaven to earth? I answer, upon the same account, they had their comfort, that they had their pardon. They were pardoned through the blood of Christ, who was virtually a lamb slain from the beginning of the world, and they were comforted by the Spirit of Christ, whose comforting office bears the same date with Christ's mediatorial office. As all their pardons were issued out upon the credit of Christ, who stood engaged in the fulness of time to lay down his life; so all the comforts which the Spirit of Christ issued out into their consciences, was upon the same credit of Christ, who should, in the fulness of time die on earth for sinners, so appear also in the Heavens (by virtue of the satisfaction that his death should make), there to intercede with the Father for a comforter. Thus you see the first thing. The Spirit as a comforter hath his office from the gospel covenant, and could never have spoke a word of comfort, but upon this gospel account

account. Hence it is, when the Father sends him as a comforter, he sends him in Christ's name, who hath made up the breach betwixt him and sinners, *John* xiv. 26. that is, for his sake, and at his entreaty: yea, when the Spirit doth comfort, what is it he saith? the joyful news he brings is gospel-intelligence, *John* xvi. 13, 14. *He shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, he shall speak;* the meaning is, when he comes to teach he shall not bring new light, different from what shines in the gospel, but what truth Christ preached in the gospel that he shall teach when he comforts; the ingredients which his soul-reviving cordials shall be made of, are what grow in the gospel-garden, as *ver.* 14. *He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shew it to you;* that is, my death, my merit, my resurrection, my ascension and intercession, my promises purchased and sealed with my blood; these he shall take and make report of them to you, for your eternal joy and comfort; so that, if it had not been for these, the Spirit, who is Christ's messenger, would have wanted an errand of this comfortable nature to have brought unto poor sinners: yea, instead of a comforter, he would have been an accuser and a tormentor; he that now bears witness with our spirits for our reconciliation, adoption, and salvation, would have joined in a sad testimony with our guilty consciences against us for our destruction.

Secondly, I am to shew the admirable fitness of the Spirit for this comforting office, which the gospel reveals him to have, for the pacifying and satisfying the consciences of poor disconsolate sinners: You have heard the gospel affords an argument sufficient to satisfy the most troubled conscience in the world; to wit, the full satisfaction which Christ by his precious blood hath made to God for sinners. But if poor man had been left to improve this as well as he could for his comfort, he might have lain long enough roaring in the horror of his conscience without ease, for want of one drop of this cooling healing balm into it. But as both the wisdom and love of God appeared in providing an able Saviour to purchase eternal redemption for us; so also a meet comforter as able to apply this purchased redemption to us; his consolations are called *strong Consolations.* Christ shewed his strength when he unhinged the gates of the grave, and made his way out of that dark prison by his glorious

glorious resurrection; by this *he was declared to be the Son of God with power, Rom.* i. 4. And truly it requires no less power to break open the dungeon wherein the guilty conscience lies shut up, as one free among the dead in his own despairing thoughts; for, if you observe it, the same stone and seal are upon the sinner's conscience to keep him down from a resurrection to comfort, as was on Christ's grave, to keep him down from a resurrection to life. What was the heaviest stone, the strongest seal upon dead Jesus to keep him from rising? Not the stone man rolled upon him; not the seal the *Jews* thought to fasten the grave with, but the curse of the law for sin, which divine justice rolled upon him. This pressed the heaviest upon Christ without all compare: The Angel himself that rolled away the stone, could not have removed the curse; now look upon the distressed conscience's grave, where its own guilt hath laid it, what is that? No other than the lowest Hell in its fears and present dismal apprehensions. I am damned, I am for ever an undone creature, is the language such an one rings continually in his own ears; but enquire, what is it that keeps him down in this grave; what hinders, but the poor wretch may be helped out of this pit of horror, and receive some comfort? Alas! he will tell you that it is but in vain to comfort him, this ointment is all wasted to no purpose, which you pour upon his head. No, he is an undone sinner; the curse of God sticks like a dagger in his heart, the wrath of God lies like a mountain of lead on his conscience, except you can put your hand into his bosom, and pluck out the one, or by main force roll off the other, it is impossible that he should be raised to any peace or comfort in his miserable conscience; you see it is the same grave-stone on both. But for thy eternal comfort know (poor heart) that thou art thus fast laid under the sense of the curse due to thy sins; as the weight is the same that keeps thee from comfort, which lay on Christ to keep him from life; so the same power and strength is sent to raise thee to comfort, that enabled Christ to rise to life. That Spirit, who kept the Lord Jesus from seeing corruption in the grave, that restrained death when it had Christ in its very mouth, so as it could no more feed on him, than the whale could digest *Jonah* in her belly; yea, that quickened his dead body, and raised him with honour, not only to life, but immortality also, is he that Christ sends for

for his messenger, to come and satisfy the trembling consciences of his poor children on earth, concerning his love, yea, his father's love to them for his sake. This blessed Spirit hath all the properties of a comforter; *He is so pure and holy, he cannot deceive;* called therefore *the Spirit of truth,* John xiv. If he tell thee thy sins are pardoned, thou mayest believe him, he will not flatter; if it were not so, he would have brought another message to thee; for he can chide and reprove as well as comfort, convince of sin as well as of righteousness. He is so wise and omniscient, that he cannot be deceived. Never did the Spirit of God knock at the wrong doors, and deliver his letters into a wrong hand. The Spirit exactly knows the heart of God to the creature, with all his counsels and purposes concerning him, 1 *Cor.* ii. 11. *The Spirit searcheth all things, the deep things of God.* And what are those deep things of God the Apostle means? But the counsels of love which lie deep in his heart, till the Spirit draws them forth, and acquaints the creature with them; as appears by *ver.* 9. And also he knows the whole frame of man's heart; it were strange if he that made the cabinet should not know every secret box in it. Some few men have compassed that we call the greater world; but the little world of man, as we call him, never did any creature encircle with his knowledge, no not the Devil himself, who hath made it his work so many thousand years to make a full discovery of it: But the Spirit of God doth know him, *intus est in cute,* (as we say) *thoroughly;* and knowing both these, he cannot be deceived.

In a word, *he is so irresistible,* that none can hinder the efficacy of his comforts. The pardon brought by *Nathan* to *David* did not lie so close as the holy man desired; and therefore he goes to beg comfort of the comforter, *Psalm* li. where you find him on his knees, praying hard to have his lost joy restored, and his trembling heart established by the free Spirit of God. Though thou canst baffle man, and through thy own melancholy fancy, and the sophistry of Satan, who coins distinctions for thee, evade the arguments that christians and ministers bring for thy comfort; yet when the Spirit comes himself, all disputes end: The Devil cannot chop logic with him; no, then the lying spirit vanisheth, and our own fears too, as the darkness flees before the sun, so sweetly and powerfully doth the comforting Spirit

rit over-run the heart with a flood of joy that the soul can no more see her sins in the guilt of them, than *Noah* could the mole-hills, when the whole earth was under water.

CHAP. IX.

A reproof to three sorts of Persons that offend against this Peace which the Gospel brings.

IS peace of conscience the blessing of the gospel? This reproves three sorts of persons.

SECT. I.

First, The *Papists*, who interpretatively deny this, in denying that any person can know in this life, unless by an extraordinary revelation, that he is a child of God, and one that shall be saved; which, if true, would stave all to pieces the vessel in which the Christian's joy and inward peace is kept; whence comes the peace we have in our consciences, but from the knowledge we have of our peace with God? Rom. v. 1. *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, by whom we have access by faith into this grace, wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

If the poor soul be left at uncertainties here, and the gospel cannot resolve it, what its state is, for Hell or Heaven, farewel to all inward peace: the poor Christian then may say of himself, with a trembling heart, what Saint *John* saith in another case of him that hateth his brother, 1 John ii. 11. *He walks in darkness, and knows not whither he goes:* truly it might rather be called the gospel of fears and doubts, than the gospel of peace. But is that the top of the blessing the gospel brings to Saints, which was almost the bottom of the curse that the law denounced against sinners? Deut. xxviii. 66. that *their life should hang in doubt before them*,

them, and they should fear day and night, and should have no assurance of life. Bold men, that dare so wickedly disfigure the sweet face of the gospel; making Christ in his precious promises, speak as doubtfully to his Saints, as the Devil did in his oracles to his devotees. Because their hypocrisy makes them justly question their own salvation, and will not suffer them to take the comfort of the promises to themselves: must they therefore seal up these wells of salvation from those that are sincere, and then lay the blame on the gospel, which is due only to their own wickedness? But there is a mystery of iniquity which hath at last been found to be at the root of this uncomfortable doctrine. They are a little kin to *Judas*, who was a thief, and carried the bag. These have a bag too, into which they put more gold and silver, that this doctrine brings them in, than ever *Judas* had in his, though the doctrine of gospel-grace to poor sinners would bring peace to others consciences, might it be seen in its naked glory among them; yet the superstitious fear which they keep ignorant souls in, brings more money to their purses; and this lies so near their heart, that gospel, Christ, Heaven, and all must bow unto it.

SECT. II.

Secondly, Those are to be reproved who frame very unlovely images in their own foolish imaginations of the gospel, as if there was nothing less than peace of conscience and inward comfort to be found in it; and all because they see some that profess it who cannot shew that they have got more peace and comfort since their acquaintance with the gospel than they had before, or than themselves have, who are yet strangers to it; yea, may be, discover more trouble of spirit. Such I desire to take these following particulars, by way of answer, into their serious consideration.

First, Consider all are not true Christians that hang upon the gospel by profession; and no blame can be laid on the gospel, though it doth not lavish out this treasure to every one that scrapes acquaintance with it. The Spirit of God is too wise and faithful to set his seal to a blank. The Minister indeed offers peace to all that will accept it; but where

the peace of the gospel meets with a false heart, it will not stay there, Matt. x. 13. *If the house be not worthy, let your peace return unto you.* As the dove returned to the ark again, when it found the earth under water; so doth the spirit of God carry his comfort back with him to Heaven from a soul that is yet in sin, soaking in his abominations; where can this heavenly dove find rest for the sole of her foot in such a soul? And will he speak peace to that soul, in which himself can find no rest?

Secondly, As for those that are sincere, true hearted Christians, there are several considerations which will vindicate the gospel to answer its name, and to be a gospel of peace and consolation.

First, Some that are sincere Christians, and yet do not so clearly understand the doctrine of the gospel as others, and the want of light, of joy, and comfort in their consciences, comes from that want of light in their understandings. The ignorance of the workman doth not disparage the art. There is fulness of comfort in the principles of the gospel, but every Christian hath not attained *to the riches of the full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ,* which the Apostle directs the *Colossians* to, as a sovereign means whereby *their hearts might be comforted,* Col. ii. 2.

Secondly, Some that do understand the doctrine of salvation by faith in Christ, (the only foundation to build and rear up true comfort and peace of conscience on;) yet may by their negligence in their Christian course, (not walking carefully by the rule of the gospel) deprive themselves at present of this sweet peace, which otherwise might flow into their bosoms from the promises of the gospel, *As many as walk by this rule, peace be on them,* Gal. vi. 16. And if so, what blame can be laid on the gospel? If the heart, (though of a Saint) be under the defilement of a present lust not repented of, no promise will speak peace to him; he is a disorderly walker, and the spirit hath his rod to whip such, no sweet-meats of joy and peace to entertain them withal in that state

Thirdly, As for those which do walk close to the rule of the gospel, (I mean by a sincere endeavour) and thou seest no such peace and comfort (as we speak of) that they have: I answer,

First,

First, They may have it, and thou not know it. The Saint's joy and peace, is not such a light gigling joy as the world's; *Res severa verum gaudium.* The parlour wherein the spirit of Christ entertains the Christian, is an inner room, not next the street, for every one that goes by, to smell the feast. *The stranger intermeddles not with his joy*, Prov. xiv. 10. Christ and the soul may be at supper, and thou not so much as see one dish go in, or hear the music that sounds so sweetly in the Christians ears; perhaps thou thinkest he wants peace, because he doth not hang out a sign in his countenance of the joy and peace he hath within. Alas! poor wretch, may not the Saint have a peaceful conscience, with a solemn, yea, sad countenance, as well as thou and thy companions have a sorrowful heart, when there is nothing but fair weather in your faces? *In laughter the heart is sorrowful*, Prov. xiv. 13. Sure he means the wicked man's laughter. It never looks more like rain with them, than when it shines; their conscience lowers, when their face laughs; so on the contrary, never more inward peace and comfort to be found in a Saint's bosom, than sometimes when his fase is blubbered with tears; shouldst thou come in and hear the Christian bemoaning himself, and complaining with sighs and sobs of his sins against God, thou wouldst go home, and cry out of this melancholy religion, and the sad condition this man was in: And yet he whom thou so pitiest can desire thee to save it for thy self, and not spend it in vain for him; who would not part with that very sorrow that scares thee so, for all the joy which the world, with all its gallantry when best set forth, could afford. There is a mystery in this sorrow thou canst not unriddle; know therefore there is a sorrow and anguish of heart which ariseth from the guilt of sin, and the fearful apprehensions of God's wrath due to sin; and another that flows not from fear of wrath arising from guilt, but from the sense of sins in being in the soul, that provokes the Christian to do that which is dishonourable to that God, who hath pardoned his sins; and this is the sorrow which sometimes makes the Saints go for sad uncomfortable creatures; when at the same time their hearts are as full of comfort from the sense of God's pardoning mercy as they can hold. This sorrow is but like a summer shower, melted by the sense of God's love, as that by the warm sun, and leaves

the soul, as that doth a garden of sweet flowers, on which it falls more fresh and odoriferous.

Secondly, Though some precious souls that have closed with Christ, and embraced the gospel, be not at present brought to rest in their own consciences, but continue for a while under some dissatisfactions and troubles in their own spirits; yet even then they have peace of conscience in a threefold respect:

First, Every true believer hath peace of conscience *in precio;* the gospel puts that price into his hand, which will assuredly purchase it, and that is the blood of Christ; we say, *that is gold which is worth gold*, which we may any where exchange for gold; such is the blood of Christ; it is peace of conscience, because the soul that hath this, may exchange it for this. God himself cannot deny the poor creature, that prays on these terms. Lord give me peace of conscience, here is Christ's blood the price of it. That which could pay the debt, surely can procure the receipt. Peace of conscience is but a discharge under God's hand, that the debt due to divine justice is fully paid; the blood of Christ hath done that the greater for the believer, it shall therefore do this the less. If there was such a rare portion, that did infallibly procure health to every one that takes it, we might safely say, as soon as the sick man hath drunk it down, that he hath drunk his health; it is in him, though at present he doth not feel himself to have it; in time it will appear.

Secondly, In promisso. Every true believer hath peace of conscience in the promise, and that we count as good as ready money in the purse, which we have sure bond for, Psal. xxix. 11. *The Lord will bless his people with peace.* He is resolved on it, and then who shall hinder it? it is worth your reading the whole *Psalm*, to see what weight the Lord gives to this sweet promise, for the encouragement of our faith in expecting the performance thereof; nothing more hard to enter into the heart of a poor creature (when all is in an uproar in his bosom, and his conscience threatening nothing but wrath and vengeance from God for his sins) than thoughts or hopes of peace and comfort. Now the *Psalm* is spent in shewing what great things God can do, and that with no more trouble to himself than a word speaking. *The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord*

Lord is full of Majesty, vers. 4. *It breaks the Cedars, it divides the flames, it shakes the wilderness, it makes the hinds to calve.* God that doth all this, promiseth to bless his people with peace, outward and inward; for without inward peace, though he might give them peace, yet could he never bless them with peace as he there undertakes. A sad peace, were it not, to have quiet streets, but cutting throats in our houses? yet infinitely more sad, to have peace both in our streets and houses, but war in our guilty consciences; what peace can a poor creature taste or relish, while the sword of God's wrath lies at the throat of conscience, not peace with God himself? Therefore Christ purchased peace of pardon, to obtain peace of conscience for his pardoned ones; and accordingly hath bequeathed it in the promise to them, *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you*, John xiv. 27. Where you see he is both the testator to leave, and the executor of his own will, to give out with his own hands what his love hath left, so that there is no fear, but his will shall be performed to the full, seeing himself lives to see it done.

Thirdly, In semine. Every believer hath this inward peace in the seed. *Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart*, Psal. xcvii. 11. where sown, but in the furrows of the believers own bosom, when principles of grace and holiness were cast into it by the spirit of God? hence it is called *the principle fruit of righteousness*, Heb. xii. 11 it shoots as naturally from holiness, as any fruit in its kind doth from the seed proper to it. It is indeed most true, that this seed runs and ripens into this fruit sooner in some, than it doth in others. This spiritual harvest comes not alike soon to all, no more than the other that is outward doth; but here's the comfort, whoever hath a seed time of grace, shall have his harvest time also of joy; this law God hath bound himself to, as strongly as for the other; which *are not to cease while the earth remaineth*, Gen. viii. 22. yea, more strongly, for that was to the world in general, not to every particular country, town, or field in these, which may want a harvest, and yet God keep his word; but God cannot perform his promise, if any one particular Saint should everlastingly go without his reaping-time. *He that goeth forth bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him*, Psal. xcvi. 6.

And

And therefore you who think so basely of the gospel, and the professors of it, because at present their peace and comfort is not come; know it is on the way to them, and comes to stay everlastingly with them, whereas your peace is going from you every moment, and is sure to leave you without any hope of returning to you again. Look not how the Christian begins, but ends; the Spirit of God by his convictions comes into the soul with some terrors, but it closeth with peace and joy. *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace,* Psal. xxxvii. 36.

SECT. III.

Thirdly, This reproves those, that think to heal their consciences with other than gospel-balm; who leave the waters of living comfort that flow from this fountain opened in the gospel by Christ, to draw their peace and comfort out of cisterns of their own hewing, and they are two; a *carnal* cistern and a *legal* cistern.

First, Some think to draw their peace out of a carnal cistern. There is not more variety of plaisters and foolish medicines used for the cure of the ague of the body, than there is of carnal receipts used by self deceiving sinners to rid themselves of the shaking ague, which the fear of God's wrath brings upon their guilty consciences; some, if they be but a little awakened by the word, and they feel their hearts chill within them, from a few serious thoughts of their wretched undone condition, fall to *Felix*'s physic; who, as soon as his conscience began to be sick at *Paul*'s sermon, had enough of the preacher, and made all the haste he could to get that unpleasing noise out of his head, *Acts* xxiv. *Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way.* Thus many turn their back of God, from those ordinances, that company, or any thing else that is likely to grate upon their consciences, and revive the thoughts of their deplored state, which all their care is to forget; such an one I have heard of, that would not be present at any funeral; could not bear the sight of his own grey hairs, and therefore used a black-lead comb to discolour them, least by these, the thoughts of death (which he so abhorred) should crowd in upon him. A poor cowardly shift, God knows, yet all that this wretch had,

had, and many more have betwixt them, and a Hell above ground in their consciences. Others, their light is so strong, and glares on them so constantly, that this will not do, but wherever they go, though they hear not a sermon in a month, look not on a bible in a year, and keep far enough from such company as would awake their consciences, yet they are haunted with their own guilt, and therefore they do not only go from the presence of the Lord, as *Cain* did, *Gen.* iv. 16. but as he also made diversion of those musing thoughts which gathered to his guilty conscience, by imploying them another way in *building a city*, ver. 17. so do they labour to give their consciences the slip in a crowd of worldly business. This is the great *Leviathan* that swallows up all the thoughts of Heaven and Hell in many men's hearts. They are so taken up with that project and this, that conscience finds them not at leisure to exchange a few words with them of a long time together. Conscience is as much spited among sinners, as *Joseph was among the Patriarchs.* That which conscience tells them, likes them no better than *Joseph*'s dream did his brethren; and this makes many play the merchants with their consciences, as they did with him; which they do by bribing it with the profits of the world. But this physic is found too weak also; and therefore *Saul*'s harp, and *Nabal*'s feast, is thought on by others; with those they hope to drown their cares, and lay their consciences asleep, like some ruffian that is under an arrest for debt, and hath no way, but to prison he must go, except he can make the Serjeant drunk in whose hand he is, which he doth, and so makes an escape. Thus many besot their conscience with the brutish pleasures of sin; and when they have laid it fast asleep in senseless stupidity, as one that is dead drunk, then they may sin without controul till it wakes again. This is the heighth of that peace which any carnal receipt can help the sinner unto; to give a sleeping potion, that shall bind up the senses of conscience for a while in which time the wretch may forget his misery, as the condemned man doth when he is asleep, but as soon as he awakes, the horror of his condition is sure again to affright him worse than before. God keep you all from such a cure for your troubles of conscience, which is a thousand times worse than the disease itself. Better to have a dog that will by his barking tell us a thief is in our yard, than one that will

will sit still, and lie us be robbed, before we have any notice of our danger.

Secondly, Some draw their peace of conscience from a legal cistern; all the comfort they have, is from their own righteousness; this good work, and that good duty they bless themselves in, when any qualm comes over their hearts; the cordial drink, which they use to revive and comfort themselves with, is drawn not from the satisfaction which Christ by his death hath given to God for poor sinners, but from the righteousness of their own lives; not from Christ's intercession in Heaven for them, but their own good prayers on earth for themselves; in a word, when any spark of disquiet kindles in their consciences, (as it were strange, if where so much combustible matter is, there should not at one time or other, some smothering fire begin in such an one's bosom) then, not Christ's blood, but their own tears are cast on to quench it. Well, whoever thou art that goest this way to work to obtain peace of conscience, I accuse thee as an enemy to Jesus Christ and his gospel. If any herb could be found growing in thy garden to heal the wounds of thy conscience, why did the Lord Christ commend for such a rarity, the balm which he came from Heaven on purpose to compound with his own blood? why doth he call sinners from all besides himself as comforters of no value, and bid us come to him, if we would find rest for our souls? *Matt.* xi. 28. No, know, poor creature, and believe it, (while the knowing of it may do thee good) either Christ was an impostor, and the gospel a fable, which I hope thou art not such an infidel, worse than the Devil himself, to believe; or else thou takest not the right method of healing thy conscience wounded for sin, and laying a sure bottom for solid peace in thy bosom; prayers and tears, good works and duties, these are not to be neglected; nay, thou canst never have peace without them, yet these do not, cannot procure this peace for thee, because they cannot obtain thy peace with God; and peace of conscience is nothing but the echo of pardoning mercy, which sounding in the conscience brings the soul into a sweet rest with the pleasant music it makes. And the echo is but the same voice repeated; so that if prayers and tears, good duties and good works, cannot procure our peace of pardon, then not our peace of comfort. Remember I said, you can never have inward peace

peace without these; and yet not have it by these. A wound would hardly ever cure, if not wrapt up from the open air, and also kept clean; yet not these, but the balm cures it. Cease therefore not from praying, or any other holy exercise of grace or duty; but from expecting thy peace and comfort to grow from their root, or else thou shuttest thyself out from having any benefit of that true peace which the gospel offers. The one resists the other, like those two famous rivers in *Germany*, whose streams when they meet, will not mingle together. Gospel-peace will not mingle and incorporate with any other: thou must drink it pure and unmixed, or have none at all. *We* (saith holy *Paul* for himself, and all other sincere believers) *are the Circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,* Phil. iii. 3. As if he had said, we are not short of any in holy duties and services; nay, we exceed them, for *we worship God in the Spirit;* but this is not the tap from whence we draw our joy and comfort; we *rejoice in Christ Jesus, not in the flesh,* where that which he called worshiping God in the Spirit, now in opposition to Christ, and rejoicing in him, he calls flesh.

SECT. IV.

Fourthly, They are to be reproved from hence, who do indeed use the balm of the gospel, for the healing of conscience-wounds; but they use it very unevangelically. The matter they bottom their peace and comfort on, is right and good, Christ and the mercy of God through him in the promise to poor sinners; what can be said better? But they do not observe gospel rule and order in the applying it. They snatch the promise presumptuously, force and ravish it, rather than seek to have Christ's consent; like *Saul*, who was in such haste, that he could not stay till *Samuel* came to sacrifice for him, but boldly falls to work before he comes; flat against order given him. Thus many are so hot upon having comfort, that they will not stay for the Spirit of God to come and sprinkle their consciences with the blood of Christ in gospel order; but profanely do it themselves, by applying the comfort of those promises which indeed at pre-

sent does not belong to them. O sirs, can this do well in the end? should he consult well for his health, that will not stay for the *Doctor*'s direction, but runs into the *Apothecary*'s shop, and on his own head takes his physic without the counsel of the *Physician*, how to prepare it, or himself, for the taking of it? This every profane wretch doth that lives in sin, and yet sprinkles himself with the blood of Christ, and blesseth himself in the pardoning mercy of God; but let such know, that as the blood of the *Paschal Lamb*, was not struck on the *Egyptian*'s doors, but the *Israelite*'s; so neither is the blood of Christ to be sprinkled on the obstinate sinner, but sincere penitent. Nay further, as that blood was not to be spilt on the thresh-hold of an *Israelite*'s door, where it might be trampled on, but on the side posts; so neither is the blood of Christ to be applied to the believer himself, while he lies in any sin unrepented of, for his present comfort. This were indeed to throw it under his foot to be trod upon. *David* confesseth his sin with shame, before *Nathan* comforts him with the news of a pardon.

CHAP. X.

Where we have a trial of our Peace from four Characters of Gospel-peace or Comfort.

Use 2. LET this doctrine be a touchstone to try the truth of your peace and comfort; hath it a gospel-stamp upon it; put thyself therefore to the trial, while I shall lay before you some characters of the peace that Christ in his gospel speaks to his people.

First, Gospel-comfort may be known by the vessel it is poured into, which is a broken heart, The promise is superscribed by name to such, and such only, Isa. lvii. 15. *I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.* Christ's commission from his father binds him up; he can comfort none

none besides, Isai. lxi. 1. *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek, he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted;* and what he receives himself from the Father, the same he gives to those he sends upon the same errand. First, His Spirit, concerning whom he tells his disciples, that the *Comforter when he is come, shall convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment,* John xvi. 7. Mark, first of sin, and as for his inferior messengers, they have direction to whom they are to apply the comforts of the gospel, Isa. xxxv. 3. *Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees; say to them that are of a fearful heart, be strong, fear not.* And upon their peril be it, if they pour this ointment upon the head of a sinner; to give such any comfort, *by promising life to him* as he is, God protests against it; he calls it a lie; a *strengthening the hands of the wicked;* and as much as in them lies, by blowing him up with a comfort, to make sure that he shall never have the true peace.—Thus you see the order of the gospel in comforting souls. As in needle-work, the sad ground work is laid before the beautiful colours; as the statuary cuts and carves his statute before he gilds it; so doth the Spirit of Christ begin with sadness, ends in joy; first cuts and wounds, then heals and overlays the soul with comfort and peace. I hope you do not think I limit the holy one in his workings to the same degree and measure in all. I have opened my thoughts in another place concerning this: but so far the convincing, humbling work of the Spirit goes in every soul before peace and comfort comes, as to empty the soul of all her false comforts and confidences which she had laid up; that the heart becomes like a vessel whose bottom is beat out, and all the water it held, thereby spilt and let out; the sins it loved, now it hates; the hopes and comforts it pleased itself with, they are gone, and the creature left in a desolate, solitary condition? no way now it sees, but perish it must, except Christ be her friend, and interpose betwixt Hell and it; to him she therefore makes her moan, as willing to follow his counsel, and to be ordered by his direction, as every patient was by his physician, of whose skill and care he is thoroughly satisfied; this I call the broken heart, which if you be wholly a stranger to, rest not. Doth your light arise out of darkness? Is your peace the issue of a soul-

conflict and trouble? Did you bleed before you were healed? You may hope it is a kindly work of God's gracious spirit; make much of it, and bless thy God that hath given this wine to cheer thy sad heart. But if thou commencest *per saltum*, hast thy wine before thy pots were filled with water? Thy morning come before thou hast thy evening; thy peace be settled before thy false peace is broken; thy conscience sound and whole before it is lanced, and the putrid stuff of thy pride, carnal confidence, and other sins thou hast lived in, be let out, thou mayest have some ease for a while; but know it, the Lord Jesus denies it to be his cure. *The strong man's house is kept in peace*, Luke xi. 21. as well as the *good man's*. It requires more power to work true sorrow, than false joy and peace; a happier man thou wouldst be, if mourning in the distress of a troubled conscience, than dance about this idol, peace, which the Devil, thy sworn enemy, mocks thee with.

Secondly, Gospel-peace is obtained in a gospel-way, and that is two-fold.

First, In a way of obedience and holy walking, Gal. vi. 16. *As many as walk by this rule, peace be on them.* Now this rule you may see, *ver.* 15. to be the rule of the *new creature*. And what is that, but the holy rule of the word? to which the principles of grace, planted in the soul of a believer, are so fitted, that there is not a more natural agreement betwixt the eye and light, than betwixt the disposition of this new nature in a Saint, and the rule of holiness in the word. Now, it is not enough for one to be a new creature, and to have a principle of grace in his bosom, but he must actually walk by this rule, or else he will be to seek for true peace in his conscience. No comfort in the Saints is to be found, but what the comforter brings. And he who commands us *to withdraw from them* (though our brethren) *that walk disorderly*, 2 Thess. iii. 9. will himself surely withdraw from such, and with-hold his comforts so long as they are disorderly walkers; which they are as long as they walk beside this rule. And therefore if thou be such an one, say not the Spirit brought thy comfort to thy hand, for he would not bid thee good speed in an evil way: No, he hath been withdrawn as a comforter ever since thou hast withdrawn thy foot from walking by the holy rule. All thy peace which thou pretendest to have in this time, is base born, and thou

thou hast more cause to be ashamed of it, than glory in it. It is little credit to the wife, that she hath a child when her husband is abroad, and cannot father it; and as little to pretend to comfort, when the Spirit of Christ will not own it.

Secondly, Gospel-peace is given into the soul in a way of duty, and close attendance on God in his ordinances. *Now the Lord of peace give you peace always, by all means*, 2 Thess. iii. 16. That is, bless all means for comforting and filling your souls with inward peace, so that he that drives no trade in ordinances, and brags of his peace and comfort, speaks enough to bring the truth of it into suspicion in the thoughts of sober Christians. I know God can by immediate illapses of his spirit comfort the Christian, and save him the labour of hearing, praying, meditating; but where did he say he would? Why may we not expect a harvest, as well without sowing and plowing, as peace without using the means? If we were like *Israel* in the wilderness, in such a state and posture, wherein the means is cut from us, and not by pride or sloth put from us, as sometimes it is the Christian's condition; he is sick, and knocked off from ordinances, or by some other providence he is shut out from the help of these means. Now I should not wonder to see comfort lie as thick in his soul, as manna about the *Israelites* tents; but as God would not rain bread any longer, when once they had corn, of which, with their labour, they might make bread, *Josh.* v. 11, 12. so neither will the Lord comfort by a miracle, when the soul may have it in an ordinance. God could have taught the *Eunuch*, and satisfied him with light from Heaven, and never have sent *Philip* to preach to him. But he chuseth to do it out of *Philip*'s mouth, rather than immediately out of his own, no doubt to put honour on his ordinance.

Thirdly, Gospel-peace in the conscience: It is strengthening and restorative; it makes the Christian strong to fight against sin and Satan; the Christian is revived, and finds his strength come, upon a little tasting of this honey: But what a slaughter doth he make of his *spiritual enemies*, when he hath a full meal of this honey, a deep draught of this wine? now he goes like a giant, refreshed with wine, into the field against them. No lust can stand before him; it makes him strong to work. O! how *Paul* laid about him for Christ; *he laboured more abundantly than them all.* The good man remembered

remembered what a wretch he once was, and what mercy he had obtained: The sense of this love of God lay so glowing at his heart, that it fired him with a zeal for God above his fellow-apostles. This made holy *David* pray so hard to drink again of this wine, which so long had been locked up from him, *Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit: Then I will teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee,* Psalm li. 12, 13. Pray mark, it was not his palate after the sweet taste of this wine of comfort, that was the only or chief reason why he so longed for it; but the admirable virtue he knew in it, to spirit and impower him with zeal for God; whereas the false peace and comfort of hypocrites is more heady than hearty; it leaves them as weak as they were before; yea, it lies rotting, like unwholsome food in the stomach, and leaves a surfeit in their souls, which soon breaks out in loose practices. Thieves commonly spend their money as ill as they get it; and so do hypocrites and formalists their stolen comforts; stay but a little, and you shall find them feasting some lust or other with them. *I have peace offerings with me* (saith the religious whore, the hypocritical harlot) *this day I have paid my vows, therefore came I forth to meet thee,* Prov. vii. 14, 15; she pacifies her conscience, and comforts herself with this religious service she performs; and now having, as she thought, quit scores with God, she returns to her own lustful trade; yea, emboldens herself from this in her wickedness; *Therefore came I forth to meet thee;* as if she durst not have played the whore with man, till she had played the hypocrite with God, and stopped the mouth of her conscience with her peace offering. Look, therefore, I beseech you, very carefully what effect your peace and comfort have in your hearts and lives. Are you the more humble or proud for your comfort? Do you walk more closely or loosely after your peace? How stand you to duties of worship? Are you made more ready for communion with God in them? Or do you grow strange to, and unfrequent in them? Have you more quickening in them, or lie more formal and lifeless under them? In a word, can you shew that grace and peace grow in thee alike? Or, doth the one less appear, since thou dost more pretend to the other? By this thou mayest know whether thy peace comes from the

the peace-maker, or peace-marrer, from the God of truth, or father of lies.

Fourthly, Gospel-peace comforts the soul, and that strongly, when it hath no other comfort to mingle with it. It is a cordial rich enough itself, and needs not any other ingredient to be compounded with it. *David* singles God out by himself; *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee,* Psalm lxxiii. 25. Give *David* but his God, and let who will take all besides; let him alone to live comfortably, may he but have his love and favour. Hence it is that the Christian's peace pays him in the greatest revenues of joy and comfort, when outward enjoyments contribute least, yea, nothing at all, but bring in trouble. *But David encouraged himself in his God,* 1 Sam. xxx. 6. you know when that was; if *David*'s peace had not been right and sound, he would have been more troubled to think of God at such a time, than of all his other disasters. *Great peace have they which love thy Law, and nothing shall offend them,* Psalm cxix. 165. This distinguisheth the Saint's peace both from the worldling's and the hypocrite's.

First, From the worldling's: His peace and comfort, poor wretch, when poverty, disgrace, sickness, or any thing else crosseth him, in that which he fondly doted on, then his night is come, and day shut up in dismal darkness. In which respect it is, that *Christ* opposeth his peace to the world's, John xiv. 27. *My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you; let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.* Pray mark, Christ is laying in arguments of comfort for his disciples against his departure, which he knew would go so near their hearts. One is taken from the difference of that peace and comfort which he leaves them, from what the world gives; as if he had said, If the peace and comfort you have from me, lay in such things as the world's peace is made up of, plenty, ease, outward prosperity, and carnal joy, truly then you had reason to be the greatest mourners at my funeral, that ever followed a friend to the grave; for after my departure, you are like to have none of these; nay, rather expect trouble and persecution. But know, the peace I left with you, is not in your houses, but hearts; the comfort I give you lies not in silver and gold, but in pardon of sin, hopes of glory and inward consolations

lations, which the comforter, that is to come from me to dwell with you, shall, upon my appointment, pay into your bosoms; and this shall out-live all the world's joy. This is such a legacy as never any left their children. Many a father dying, hath, in a farewell speech to his children, wished them all peace and comfort when he should be dead and gone; but who besides Jesus Christ could send a comforter into their hearts, and thrust peace and comfort into their bosoms?

Again, It distinguisheth the true Christian's peace from the hypocrite's, who, though he pretends to place his comfort, not in creatures, but in God; and seems to take joy in the interest, which he lays claim to have in Christ and the precious promises of the gospel; yet when it comes indeed to the trial, that he sees all his creature-comforts gone, and not like to return (which at this time had his heart, though he would not it should be thought so), and now he sees he must to another world, to stand or fall eternally, as he shall then be found in God's own scrutiny to have been sincere or false-hearted to Christ and his grace; truly then his thoughts recoil, his conscience flies in his face, and reproacheth him for spiritual forgery? Does thy peace go with thee just to the prison door, and there leave thee? Art thou confident thy sins are pardoned all the while thou art in health and strength; but as soon as ever the serjeant knocks at the door to speak with thee (death I mean), then thy thoughts alter, and thy conscience tells thee, he comes to prove thee a liar in thy pretended peace and joy: This is a sad symptom. I know, indeed, that the time of affliction is a trying-time to grace that is true; the sincere Christian for a while may, like a valiant soldier, be beat from his artillery, and the enemy, Satan, may dispossess him of his peace and confidence; yea, so far have some precious Saints been carried down the stream of violent temptations, as to question whether their former comforts were from the holy Spirit the comforter, or the evil Spirit the deceiver; yet there is great difference between the one and the other.

First, They differ in their causes, this darkness which sometimes is upon the sincere Christian's spirit in deep distress, comes from the withdrawing of God's lightsome countenance; but the horror of the other, from his own guilty conscience, that before was lulled asleep with prosperity, but

but now being awakened by the hand of God on him, doth accuse him to have been false with God in the whole course of his profession. It is true some particular guilt may be contracted by the Christian through negligence, or strong temptation in his Christian course; for which his conscience may accuse him, and may further imbitter the present desertion he is in so far, from those miscarriages to fear his sincerity in the rest, though he hath no reason to do it: but his conscience cannot charge him of any hypocritical design, to have been the spring that hath set him on work through the whole course of his profession.

Secondly, There is something concomitant with the Christian's present darkness of spirit, that distinguisheth it from the hypocrite's horror; and that is the lively working of grace, which then commonly is very visible, when his peace and former comfort are most questioned by him: The less joy he hath from any present sense of the love of God, the more abounding you shall find him in sorrow for his sin, that clouded his joy; the further Christ is gone out of his sight, the more he clings in his love to Christ, and vehemently cries after him in prayer, as we see in *Heman*, Psalm lxxxviii. 13. *Unto thee have I cried, O Lord, and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee.* O! the fervent prayers that then are shot from his troubled spirit to Heaven, the pangs of affection, which are springing after God, his face and favour! Never did a banished child more desire admittance into his angry father's presence, than he to have the light of God's countenance shine on him, which is now vailed from him. Oh! how he searcheth his heart, studies the Scripture, wrestles with God for to give him that grace, the non-evidence of which, at present, makes him so question the comforts he hath formerly had; might he but have true grace, he will not fall out with God for want of comfort, though he stays for it till the other world. Whereas the hypocrite, in the midst of all his horror, doth not, cannot (till he hath a better heart put into his bosom) cordially love or desire grace and holiness for any intrinsical excellency in itself, only as an expedient for escaping the tormentor's hand, which he sees he is now falling into.

They differ in the issue. The Christian, he, like a star in the Heavens, wades through the cloud that, for a time, hides his comfort; but the other, like a meteor in the air, blazeth

a little, and then drops into some ditch or other, where it is quenched; Prov. xiii. 9. *The light of the righteous rejoiceth, but the lamp* (or *candle*, as in the *Hebrew*) *of the wicked is put out;* the sincere Christian's joy and comfort is compared there to the light of the sun, that is climbing higher, while it is muffled up with the clouds from our eye; and by and by, when it breaks out more gloriously, doth rejoice over those mists and clouds that seemed to obscure it; but the joy of the wicked, like a candle, wastes and spends, being fed with gross fuel of outward prosperity, which in a short time fails, and the wretch's comfort goes out in a snuff at last, past all hope of being lighted again. The Christian's trouble of spirit again is compared to a fainting fit, which he within awhile recovers, *Psalm* xl. A qualm comes over the holy man's heart, from the thoughts of his sins in the day of his great distress, ver. 12. *Innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head, therefore my heart faileth me.* But before the *Psalm* is at an end, after a few deep groans in prayer *(ver.* 13. 14.) he comes again to himself, and acts his faith strongly on God, ver. 17. *Yet the Lord thinketh on me, thou art my helper and my deliverer.* But the hypocrite's confidence and hope, when once it begins to sink and faulter, it dies and perisheth, Job xi. 20. *The eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape; their hope shall be as the giving up of the ghost.*

CHAP. XI.

That the Gospel alone can unite the hearts of Men together in true Peace, and how the Gospel doth it.

WE come now to the third kind of peace, which I call *a peace of love and unity.* A heavenly grace this, whereby the

the minds and hearts of men, that even now jarred and rang backwards, are made tuneable to each other, so as to chime all in to an harmonious consent and concord among themselves. Thus peace in Scripture is frequently taken, *Mar.* ix. 50. *Heb.* xiii, 14. 1 *Thess.* v. 13. Now the gospel is a gospel of peace, if taken in this notion also, which we shall briefly speak to from this note.

That the gospel, and only the gospel, can knit the hearts and minds of men together in a solid peace and love. This, next to the reconciling us to God and ourselves, is especially designed by Christ in the gospel; and truly those without this, would not fill up the Saints happiness, except God should make a Heaven for every Christian by himself to live in. *John Baptist*'s ministry, which was, as it were, the preface to, and brief contents of the gospel, was divided into these two heads; *To turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God,* Luke i. 16. *and to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,* ver. 17; that is, to make them friends with God and one another. This is the natural effect of the gospel, where it is powerfully and sincerely embraced; to unite and endear the hearts of men and women in love and peace together, how contrary soever they were before. This is the strange *Metamorphosis* which the Prophet speaks shall be under the gospel, Isaiah xi. 8. *The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid;* that is, men and women, between whom there was as great feud and enmity as is betwixt those creatures; they shall yet sweetly agree, and lie in one another's bosoms peaceably; and how all this, but by the efficacy of the gospel on their hearts; so ver. 9. *For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord.* Indeed it is in the dark when men fight, and draw upon one another in wrath and fury: if gospel-light comes once savingly in, the sword will soon be put up; the sweet Spirit of love will not suffer these doings where he dwells; and so peculiar is this blessing to the gospel, that Christ appoints it for the badge and cognizance by which they should not only know one another, but even strangers should be able to know them from any other sect of men in the world, John xiii. 35. *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, that ye love one another;* a nobleman's servant is known as far as he can well be seen, by the coat on his back; so, saith Christ, shall all men know you, by your

mutual love. If we would judge curiously of wine, what is its natural relish, we must taste of it, before it comes into the huckster's hands, or after it is refined from its lees; so the best way to judge of the gospel, and the fruit it bears, is to taste of it either when it was professed and embraced with most simplicity, and that was without doubt in the first promulgation; or, secondly, when it shall have its full effect on the hearts of men, and that is in Heaven; in both these, though chiefly the last, this peace will appear to be the natural fruit of the gospel.

First, When the gospel was first preached and embraced, what a sweet harmony of peace, and admirable unity of heart was then amongst the holy professors of it, who but a while before were either mere strangers to, or bitter enemies one against another? they lived and loved, as if each Christian's heart had forsaken his own, to creep into his brother's bosom. They alienated their estates, to keep their love entire; they could give their bread out of their own mouths, to put it into their brethrens that were hungry; yea, when their love to their fellow Christians was most costly and heavy, it was least grudged and felt by them; see those blessed souls, *Acts* ii. 46. *They sold their possessions and goods, and parted to all men, as every one had need; and they continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking of bread from house to house, did eat their bread with gladness, and singleness of heart.* Yea, they are more merry, they are merry now they have been emptying of their bags by charity, than if they had come from filling them by worldly traffick. So notorious was the love of Christians in the primitive times, that the very Heathens would point at them, as *Tertullian* saith, and say *See how they love one another*; and therefore, if less love, and peace be found now amongst Christians, the blame lies not on the gospel, but them; the gospel is as peaceful, but they are *minus Evangelici*, less evangelical, as we shall further shew.

Secondly, Look on the gospel in the accomplishment of all in Heaven; when the hearts of Saints shall be truly gospelized, and the promises concerning the peaceable state of Saints have their full accomplishment; then above all, this peace of the gospel will appear. Here it is put out and in, like a budding flower in the spring, which one warm

warm day opens a little, and another that is cold and sharp, shuts again. *The silence in this lower Heaven,* the church on the earth, is but for the space of half an hour, *Rev.* viii. 1. Now there is love and peace among Christians; anon scandals are given, and differences arise, which drive this sweet spring back; but in Heaven it is full blown, and so continues to eternity. There dissenting brethren are made thorough-friends, never to fall out; there, not only the wound of contention is cured, but the scar which is here oft left upon the place, is not to be seen on the face of Heaven's peace, to disfigure the beauty of it, which made that *German* divine so long to be in Heaven, where, said he, *Luther* and *Zuinglius* are perfectly agreed, though they could not on earth.

But I come to give some particular account how the gospel knits the hearts and minds of men in peace together, and why the gospel alone can do this; while I clear one, I shall the other also.

First, This gospel knits the hearts of men together, as it propounds powerful arguments for peace and unity; and indeed such as are found no where else. It hath cords of love to draw and bind souls together, that were never weaved in nature's loom; such as we may run through all the *Topicks* of morality, and meet with none of them, being all supernatural, and of divine revelation, *Eph.* iv. 3. The *Apostle* exhorts them to *keep the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace.* And how doth he persuade them, ver. 4, 5, 6, 7. *First, there is one body,* but such an one as *natural Philosophy* treats not of; but a mystical one, the *Church,* which consists of several Saints, as the natural body of several members; and as it were strange to see one member to fall out with another, which are all preserved in life by their union together; so much more in the mystical body. *Again, one spirit,* that is the same holy Spirit, which quickens all that are true Saints, and is to the whole number of Saints, as the soul is to the whole man, informing every part. Now as it were a prodigious violence to the law of nature, if the members by an intestine war among themselves, should drive the soul out of the body, which gives life to them in union together; so much more would it be for Christians to force the holy Spirit from them, by their contentions and strifes; as indeed a wider door

cannot

cannot easily be opened for him to go out at. Again, it presseth unity, from the *one hope of our calling*, where hope is put *pro re sperata*; the bliss we all hope for in Heaven; there is a day coming, and it cannot be far from us, in which we shall meet lovingly in Heaven, and sit at one feast, without grudging one to see what lieth on another's trencher; full fruition of God shall be the feast, and peace and love the sweet music that shall sound to it; and what folly is it for us to fight here, who shall feast there? draw blood of one another here, that shall so quickly lie in each other's bosoms? Now the gospel invites to this feast, and calls us to this hope. I might run through the other particulars, which are all as purely evangelical as these, *one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism*, but enough to have given you a taste.

Secondly, The gospel doth this, as it takes away the cause of that feud and enmity, which is among the sons and daughters of men, and they chiefly two. The curse of God on them, and their own lusts in them.

First, The feud and hostility that is among men and women, is part of that curse which lies on mankind for his apostacy from God. We read, *Gen.* iii. 17. how the ground was cursed for man's sake; *Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee*, (saith God.) But a far greater curse it was, that one man should become as a thorn and briar to fetch blood from another. Some have a fancy, that the *Rose* grew in paradise without prickles. To be sure man, had he not sinned, should never have been such a pricking briar as now the best of them is, These thorns that come up so thick in man's quarrelsome nature, what do they speak, but the efficacy of God's curse? The first man that was born in the world, proved a murderer: and the first that died, went to his grave by that bloody murderer's hand; may we not wonder as much at the power of God's curse on man's nature, that appeared so soon in *Cain's* malicious heart, as they did at the sudden withering of the fig-tree blasted by Christ's curse? And truly, it was but just with God, to mingle a preverse spirit among them, who had expresssd so false an one to him. They deserved to be confounded in their language, and suffered to bite and devour one another, who durst make an attempt upon God himself, by their disobedience; very observable is that in

Zceh.

Zech. xi. 10. compared with the fourteenth. When once the *staff of beauty*, ver. 10. (which represented God's covenant with the *Jews*) was asunder, then presently the *staff of bands* (which signified the *brotherhood between Judah and Jerusalem*) was cut a sunder also. When a people break covenant with God, they must not expect peace among themselves: It is the wisdom of a Prince, if he can, to find his enemy work at home. As soon as man fell out with God, behold there is a fire of war kindled at his own door, in his own nature. No more bitter enemy now to mankind, than itself. One man is a wolf, a devil to another. Now before, there can be any hope of true solid peace among men, this curse must be reversed; and the gospel, and only the gospel can do that, where an expedient is found how the quarrel betwixt God and the sinner may be reconciled; which done, the curse ceaseth. A curse is a judiciary doom, whereby God in wrath condemns his rebel creature to something that is evil. *But there is no condemnation to him that is in Christ.* The curse is gone, no arrow now in the bow of threatening; that was shot into Christ's heart, and can never enter into the believer's; God may whip his people, by some unbrotherly unkindness they receive one from another's hands, by way of fatherly chastisement, (and indeed it is as sharp a rod as he can use in his discipline) the more to make them sensible of their falling out with him. But the curse is gone, and they under a promise of enjoying peace and unity, which they shall, when best for them.

Secondly, The eternal cause of all the hostility and feud that is to be found amongst men, is lust; that this is the principle and root that bears all the bitter fruit of strife and contention in the world. James iv 1. *From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?* This breaks the peace with God, ourselves, and others. If there be a fiery exhalation wrapped up in the cloud, we must expect thunder and lightening to follow: if lust be in the heart, it will vent itself, though it rends peace of family, church and kingdom. Now, before there can be a foundation for a firm solid peace, these unruly lusts of men must be taken down. What peace and quiet can there be, while pride, envy, ambition, malice, and such like lusts, continue to sit

sit in the throne, and hurry men at their pleasure? Neither will it be enough for the procuring peace, to restrain these unruly passions, and bind them up forcibly; if peace be not made between the hearts of men. it is worth nothing. The chain that ties up the mad dog, will in time wear; and so will all the cords break, by which men seem at present so strongly bound together, if they be not tied by the heart-strings, and the grounds of the quarrel be there taken away. Now the gospel, and only the gospel, can help us to a plaister, that can draw out of the heart the very core of contention and strife. Hear the Apostle, telling us how himself, and others, his fellow Saints, got cured of that malicious heart, which once they were in bondage to, Tit. iii. 3. *We ourselves were sometimes foolish and disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures; living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.* Well, what was the physic that recovered them? See *ver.* 4. *But after the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.* As if he had said, had not this love of God to us in Christ appeared, and we been thus washed by his regenerating Spirit, we might have lain to this day under the power of those lusts, for all the help that any other could afford us. Mortification is a work of the Spirit, Rom. viii. 13. *If through the Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the flesh, ye shall live.* And the gospel is the sacrificing knife in the hand of the Spirit; the word is called the *Sword of the Spirit,* as that which he useth to kill and slay sin within the hearts of his people.

Thirdly, As the gospel lays the axe to the root of bitterness and strife, so it fills the hearts of those that embrace it, with such gracious principles, as incline to peace and unity; such are *Self-denial,* that prefers another in honour before himself, and will not justle for the wall. *Long-suffering,* a grace which is not easily moved and provoked; *Gentleness,* which if moved by any wrong, keeps the doors open for peace to come in at again, and makes him easy to be intreated. See a whole bundle of these sweet herbs growing in one bed, Gal. v. 22. *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, faith, meekness.* Mark, I pray, this is not fruit that grows on every hedge, but *fruit of*

of the Spirit : Fruit that springs from gospel-seed. As the stones in the quarry, and cedars as they grow in the wood, would never have lain close and comely together in the Temple ; so neither could the one cut and polish, nor the other hew and carve themselves into that fitness and beauty, which they all had in that stately fabrick ; no, that was the work of men gifted of God for that purpose ; neither can men, and women, with all their skill and tools of morality, square and frame their hearts, so as to fall in lovingly together into one holy Temple : This is the work of the Spirit, and that also with this instrument, and chissel of the gospel, to do, partly by cutting off the knottiness of our churlish natures, by his mortifying grace ; as also carving, polishing, and smoothing them, with those graces which are the emanations of his own sweet, meek and holy Spirit.

CHAP. XII.

Wherein it is shewn the Difference between the Peace that is among Saints, and which is among the Wicked. The Greatness of the Sin of Ministers of Peace, who stir up Strife : and the Reason why there is no more Peace and Unity among Saints in this Life.

Use 1. THIS helps us what to think of that peace and love, which sometimes is found among the wicked. It is not true peace, and solid love, because they are strangers to the gospel, which alone can unite hearts together. What then, shall we call this their peace ? *In some* it is a mere conspiracy, *Say ye not confederacy to all them, to whom this people shall say confederacy,* Isa. viii. 12. The peace of some is rather founded in wrath to the Saints, than love among themselves. They are united, but how ? no

other way than *Sampson's* foxes, to do mischief to others, rather than good to themselves. Two dogs that are worrying one another, can leave off to run both after a hare that comes by them; who, when the chase is over, can at it as fiercely as before. *In the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together, for before they were at enmity between themselves,* Luke xxiii. 12. Again, the peace and unity of others is founded upon some base lust that ties them together; thus shall you see a knot of good fellows, as they miscall themselves, with abundance of seeming content in one another; and a pack of thieves, when upon a wicked design, jug and call one another together (as partridges their fellows) saying, *Come with us, cast in thy lot among us, let us all have one purse,* Prov. i. 14. Here now is peace and unity; but alas! they are only *brethren in iniquity.* Thirdly, where it is not thus gross, as it cannot indeed be denied, but there are some that never felt the power of the gospel, so as to be made new creatures by it, who yet hold very fair quarter one with another, and correspond together; and that not on so base and sordid an account, among whom such offices of love are reciprocated, as do much sweeten their lives, and endear them one to another; and for this they are much beholden to the gospel, which doth civilize oft, where it doth not sanctify. But this is a peace so fundamentally defective, that it doth not deserve the name of true peace.

First, It is superficial and external, not inward and cordial; we may say, rather their lusts are chained from open war, than their hearts changed into inward love. As the beasts agree in the ark pretty well, yet keep their hostile nature, so do unregenerate men.

Secondly, It is unsanctified peace. First, because while they seem to have peace with one another, they have not peace with God; and it is peace with God takes away the curse. *Secondly,* because it proceeds from unsanctified hearts: it is the altar that sanctifies the gift; the heart, the unity, *Amicitia non est nisi inter bonos.* A Heathen could say, true love and friendship can only be between good men; but alas he knew not what made a good man. When God intends in mercy to make the hearts of men one, he he first makes them new, Ezek. xi. 19 *And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you*; the

the peace of the right kind, is a fruit of the Spirit, and that sanctifies before it unites. *Thirdly*, because the end that all such propound in their love is carnal, not spiritual. As *Austin* did not admire *Cicero* for his eloquence and oratory so much, as he did undervalue and pity him, because the name of Jesus Christ was not to be found in him. Is it his glory they aim at? Christ's commands that binds them to peace? No, alas! here is the still voice, but God is not in it; their own quiet and carnal advantage is the *primum mobile;* peace and unity are such good guests, and pay so well for their entertainment, that this makes men who have no grace, if they have but their wits left, desirous to keep up an external peace among themselves.

In a word, it is a peace that will not long last, because it wants a strong cement: stones may a while lie together without mortar, but not long. The only lasting cement for love, is the blood of Christ, as *Austin* saith of his friend *Alypius*, and himself, they were *sanguine Christi glutinati.*

Use 2. Is the gospel a gospel of peace in this sense, as taken for unity and love? This dips their sin into a deep dye, who abuse the gospel to a quite contrary end; and make it their instrument to promote strife and contention; such the *Apostle* speaks of, *Phil.* i. 15. *Some indeed preach Christ out of envy and strife.* The gospel of peace is a strange text, one would think, to preach division, and raise strife from, and the pulpit as strange a mount for to plant the battering pieces of contention on. O how strangely do these men forget their Lord that sent them, who is a *Prince of peace*, and their work, which is not to blow a trumpet of sedition and confusion, or sound an alarm to battle, but rather a joyful retreat from the bloody fight, wherein their lusts had engaged them against God and one another! Indeed, there is a war they are to proclaim, but it is only against sin and Satan, and I am sure we are not fit to march out against them, till we can agree among ourselves. What would the Prince think of that Captain, who instead of encouraging his soldiers to fall on with united forces, as one man against the common enemy, should make a speech to set the soldiers together by the ears among themselves? surely he would hang him up for a traitor. Good was *Luther's* prayer, *From a vain-glorious Doctor, a contentious Pastor, and nice questions, the Lord deliver his Church.*— And we in these sad times have reason to say as hearty an

Amen to it as any since his age. Do we not live in a time when the church is turned into a *Sophister*'s school? where such a wrangling and jangling hath been, that the most precious truths of the gospel are lost already to many, whose eyes are put out with the dust these contentions have raised, and they have at last disputed themselves out of all their sober principles. Woe to such men who have prostituted the gospel to such devilish ends. God may have mercy on the cheated souls to bring them back to the love of the truth; but for the cheaters, they are gone too far towards Hell, that we cannot look for their return.

Use 3. This gives us the reason why there is no more peace and unity among Saints themselves; the gospel cannot be faulted, that breathes peace. No, it is not because they are gospellers, but because they are but imperfectly gospellized, that they are not more peaceful; the more they partake of the spirit of the gospel, the less will they be haunted with the evil spirit of contention and strife. The best of Saints are in part unevangelical in two particulars, from which comes all the unkind quarrelings, and unbrotherly contests among them.

First, In their judgments: *They know but in part, and prophesy but in part*, 1 Cor. xiii. 9. He that pretends more boasts without his measure, and doth thereby discover what he denies—his ignorance. And this defect in the Saint's judgment, exposeth them sometimes to drink in principles that are not evangelical. Now these are they that make the bustle, and disturb their peace and unity. All truth is reducible to an unity; like lines they lovingly meet in one center, the *God of truth*; and so far from justling and clashing, that (as stones in an arch) they uphold one another. And they which so sweetly agree in one, cannot learn us to divide. No, it is *this stranger, error,* that creeps in among the Saints, and will needs be judge; this breaks the peace, and kindles a fire in the house, that in a while, if let alone, will be seen at the house-top. Wholesome food makes no disturbance to a healthful body; but corrupt food doth presently make the body feverish, and then, when the man is distempered, no wonder if he is pettish and peevish; we have seen it by woeful experience. Those from whom we had nothing but sweetness and love, while they fed on the same dish of gospel-truth with us, how strangely froward are they grown,

grown, since they have taken down some unevangelical and erroneous principles? That we know not well how to carry ourselves towards them, they are so captious and quarrelsome; yea, at the very hearing of the word, if they have not yet forgot the way to the ordinance, what a distasteful behaviour do many of them shew? as if every word went against their stomach. O Sirs, let us not blame the gospel; it is innocent to these sad contentions among us. *Paul* tells us where to find a father for this brat of strife; see at whose door he directs us to lay it, Rom. xvi. 17. *Now I beseech you brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine ye have learned.* Where I pray observe how he clears the gospel; they never learned it in Christ's school; and then *tacitly* implies, they have it somewhere else, from some false teacher, and false doctrine. *Mark them*, saith he, as if he had said, observe them well, and you shall find them tainted some way or other; they have been warming themselves at Satan's fire, and from thence have brought a coal with them that does the mischief.

Secondly, Christians are in part unevangelical in their hearts and lives. The whole root of sin is not stubbed up at once, no wonder some bitter taste remains in the fruit they bear. Saints in Heaven shall be all grace, and no sin in them; and then they shall be all love also; but here they are part grace, part corruption, and so their love is not perfect; how can they be fully sodered together in unity never to fall out, as long as they are not fully reconciled to God (in point of sanctification) but now and then there happens some breaches betwixt them and God himself; and the less progress the gospel hath made in their hearts to mortify lust, and strengthen grace, the less peace and love is to be expected among them. The *Apostle* concludes from the contentions among the Christians at *Corinth*, that they were of little growth in grace, 1 Cor. iii 2. *I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able; for ye are yet carnal.* Nay, he conceives this to be so clear evidence, that he appeals to their consciences if it be not so, *ver.* 3.— *For whereas there is among you envyings, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?* But as grace strengthens, and the gospel prevails on the hearts of Christians, so does love and a spirit of unity increase with it.

it. We say, older and wiser; though children, when young do scratch and fight, yet when they get up into years, they begin to agree better. Those that are young and weak, are peevish and quarrelsome. Age and strength brings wisdom to overcome those petty differences that now cannot be borne. In the controversy between *Abraham* and *Lot*'s servants, *Abraham* who was the elder and stronger Christian, he was most forward for peace, so as to crave it at the hands of his nephew; *Paul*, who was a Christian higher by the head than others, O how he exceeded in love! he saith of himself, 1 Tim. i. 14. *The grace of our Lord is exceeding abundant, with faith and love which is in Jesus Christ:* Where, saith master *Calvin*, *Fides incredulitati opponitur; dilectio in Christo, sœvitiæ, quam exercuerat adversus fideles.* Faith is opposed to his former obstinate unbelief, when a *Pharisee;* love in Christ Jesus, to the cruelty he expressed against Christians, when (breathing slaughter) he went on a persecuting errand to *Damascus*. Now he was as full of faith, as then of unbelief; now as fire-hot of love to the Saints, as then of cruelty against them. But that I quote chiefly the place for is, to see how this pair of graces thrive and grow together, if abundant in faith, then abundant in love.

CHAP. XIII.

An Exhortation to the Saints to maintain Peace among themselves, and promote it to their utmost.

Use 4. IT brings a seasonable exhortation to all the Saints, that they would nourish peace among themselves; you all profess to have been baptized into the spirit of the gospel, but you do not shew it, when you bite and snarl at one another. The gospel, that makes wolves and lambs agree, doth not teach the lambs to turn wolves, and devour each other. Our Saviour told the two disciples whose choler was soon up, that they would be fetching fire from Heaven, to go

go on their revengeful errand; that they little thought from what hearth that wild-fire of their passions came, *Ye know not of what spirit ye are of,* Luke ix. 56. As if he had said, such fiery wrathful speeches do not suit with the meek master you serve, nor with the gospel of peace he preached to you. And if the gospel will not allow us to pay our enemies in their own coin, and give them wrath for wrath; then much less will it suffer brethren to spit fire at one another's face. No, when any such embers of contention begin to smoak among Christians, we may know who left the spark; no other but Satan, he is the great kindle coal of all their contentions. If there be a tempest, (not in the air) but in the spirits of Christians, and the wind of their passions be high and loud; it is easy to tell who is the conjurer; *Paul* and *Barnabas* set out in a calm together, but the Devil sends a storm after them, such a storm as parted them in the midst of their voyage, Acts xv. 39. *And the contention was so sharp betwixt them, that they parted asunder one from the other.* There is nothing, (next Christ and Heaven) that the Devil grudged believers more than their peace and mutual love; if he cannot rend them from Christ, stop them from getting Heaven, yet he takes some pleasure to see them go thither in a storm; like a shattered fleet severed one from another, that they may have no assistance from, nor comfort of, each others company all the way; though where he can divide, he hopes to ruin also, well knowing this to be the most probable means to effect it; one ship is easier taken than a squadron. A town, if it can be but set on fire, the enemy may hope to take it with more ease; let it therefore be your great care to keep the Devil's spark from your powder. Certainly peace among Christians is no small mercy, that the Devil's arrows fly so thick at its breast.—Something I would fain speak to endear this mercy to the people of God. I love I confess a clear and still air, but above all in the church among believers; and I am made the more sensible what a mercy this would be, by the dismal consequence of these divisions and differences, that have for some years together troubled our air, and filled us with such horror and confusion, that we have not been much unlike that land called *Terra del fugo,* the *Land of smoke,* because of the frequent flashings of lightnings, and abundance of smoke found there; what can I compare error to, better than

than smoak? and contention to, than fire? A kind of emblem of Hell itself, where the flames and darkness meet together to encrease the horror of the place. But to press the exhortation a litte closer, give me leave to provoke you by three arguments to peace and unity.

SECT. I.

First, *For Christ's sake.* And me thinks, when begging for his sake, I should have no nay: When you pray to God, and do but use his name in the business, you are sure to speed. And why should not an exhortation, for Christ's sake, move your hearts to duty, as a prayer put up by you in his name, moves God's heart to mercy? Indeed, how canst thou in faith use Christ's name as an argument to unlock God's heart to thee, which hath not so much credit with thyself, as to open thy own heart into a compliance with a duty which is so strongly set on his heart, to promote among his people? As appears,

First, By the solemn charge he gave his disciples in this particular, John xiii. 34. *A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.* I pray, observe how he prepares their hearts to open readily, and bid this commandment kindly welcome; he sets his own name upon it. *A new commandment I give unto you:* As if he had said, let this command, though as old as any other, *Lev.* xix. 18. yet go under my name in an especial manner: When I am gone, and the fire of strife begins at any time among you, remember what particular charge I now give you, and let it quench it presently.

Again, Observe how he delivers this precept, and that is by way of gift and privilege; a new commandment *I give unto you.* Indeed, this was Christ's farewel sermon: The very strokings of that milk which he had fed them with, never dropped a sweeter discourse from his blessed lips; he saved his best wine till the last: He was now making his will; and, amongst other things he bequeaths his disciples, he takes this commandment, as a father would do his sealring off his finger, and gives it to them. *Again,*

Thirdly, He doth not barely lay the command before them,

them; but, to make it the more effectual, he annexeth, in a few words, the most powerful argument why they should, as also the most clear and full direction how they might do this; *As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.* O! Christians, what may not the love of Christ command you? If it were to lay down your lives for him that loved you to death? And shall not this his love persuade you to lay down your strifes and divisions? This speaks enough, how much weight he laid upon this commandment; but then again observe, how Christ, in the same sermon, over and over again, minds them of this; which, if he had not been very solicitous of, should not have had so large a room in his thoughts then, when he had so little time left, in which he was to crowd and sum up all the heavenly counsel and comfort that he desired to leave with them before his departure; nay, so great weight he lays on this, that he seems to lock up his own joy and their's together in the care that they should take about this one command of loving one another, John xv. 11. *These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you; and that your joy might be full.* What these things were, appears by the precedent verse, *If ye keep my commandment, ye shall abide in my love.* These were the things that he spake of, in order to his joy in them, and their's in him, that they would keep his commandments. Now, to let them know how high a place their obedience to this particular command of love and unity had in his heart, and how eminently it conduced to the continuing his joy in them, and filling up their own; but instance what he had said, ver. 12. *This is my commandment, that ye love one another.* Observe still how Christ appropriates this commandment to himself. *This is my commandment,* as if he would signify to them, that as he had one disciple, who went by the name of the disciple whom Jesus loved, so he would have a darling commandment, in which he takes some singular delight, and that this should be it, *their loving one another.* But we are not yet at the last link of this golden chain of Christ's discourse. When he hath put some more warmth into their affections to this duty, by exposing his own love to them in the deepest expression of it, even to die for them, *ver.* 13. and tells them he will own them for his friends, as they are careful to observe what he had left in charge with them, ver. 14. *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.* And now

taking it for granted, that he had prevailed upon them, and they would walk in unity and love as he had commanded them, he cannot conceal the pleasure that he takes therein, yea, and in them for it; *ver.* 15. he opens his heart to them, and locks no secret from them; yea, bids them go and open their heart to God, and be free to him as he is to them. *ver.* 16. And mark from what blessed hour all this familiarity that they are admitted to, bears date. *From henceforth I call not you servants, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doth.* That is, from the time that you walk dutifully to me, and lovingly to one another. One would think now he had said enough, but he thinks not so. In the very next words he is at it again, ver. 17. *These things I command you, that you love one another;* as if all he had left else in charge with them had been subservient to this.

Secondly, A second thing that speaks Christ's heart deeply engaged in the promoting of love and unity among Christians, is his fervent prayer for this. Should you hear a preacher with abundance of vehemency press a grace or duty upon the people in his pulpit, and, as soon as the sermon is done, you should go under his closet window, and hear him as earnestly wrestling with God, that he would give his people what he had so zealously pressed upon them; you would easily believe the man was in earnest. Our blessed Saviour hath taught his ministers whither to go when they come out of the pulpit, and what to do; no sooner hath he done his sermon to them, but he is at prayer with God for them. And what he insisted on most in preaching, he enlargeth most upon in prayer; unity and peace was the legacy he desired so much to leave with them, and this is the boon he puts in strongly with God to bestow on them, Job xvii. 11. *Father, keep through thine own power, those that thou hast given me;* and why all this care? *that they might be one, as we are*; as if he had said, Father, did we ever fall out? Was there ever any discord betwixt us? Why then should they, who are thine and mine, disagree? So *ver.* 21. and *ver.* 23. he is pleading hard for the same mercy. But as Christ said of the voice that came from Heaven, John xii. 30. *This voice came not for me, but for your sakes.* So may I say here: This zeal of Christ for his peoples unity and love, was for their sakes.

First, He would by this raise the price of this mercy in their

their thoughts; that sure is worth their care, which he counted worth his redoubled prayer (when not a word was spoke for his own life), or he misplaced his zeal, and improved not his time with God, for the best advantage of his people.

Secondly, He would make divisions appear more dreadful things to his people, by putting in so many requests to God for preventing them. Certainly if Christ had known one evil worse than another like to come upon his people at his departure, he would have been so true and kind to his children, as to deprecate that above all. He told his children what they must look for at the world's hand, all manner of sufferings and torments that their wit could help their malice to devise; yet Christ prays not so much for immunity from these, as from unbrotherly contentions among themselves; he makes account, if they can agree together, and be in love, saint with saint, church with church, they have a mercy that will alleviate the other, and make it tolerable, yea, joyous; this heavenly fire of love among themselves will quench the flames of their persecutors, at least the horror of them.

In a word, Christ would strengthen our faith to ask boldly for that which he hath bespoke for us, so also aggravate the sin of contention to such a height, that all who have any love to Christ, when they shall see that they cannot live in strife, but they must sin against those prayers which Christ, with strong cries, put up for peace and unity, they may tremble at the thoughts of it.

Thirdly, The price that Christ gave for the obtaining of this peace and unity. As Christ went from preaching up peace to pulling down peace from Heaven by prayer, so he went from praying to paying for it. Indeed Christ's prayers are not a beggar's prayers, as ours are; he prays his Father that he may only have what he pays for. He was now on the way to the place of payment, *Calvary*, where his blood was the coin he laid down for this peace. I confess, peace with God was the chief pearl that this wise merchant, Christ, bought up for his people. But he had this in his eye also; and therefore the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which is the commemoration-feast of Christ's death, as it seals our peace with God, so it signifies our love one with another, 1 *Cor.* x. And need I now give you any account why our dear Lord pursued this design so close, of knitting his

people in peace and unity together? Truly the church is intended by Christ to be his house, in which he means to take up his rest, and what rest could he take in a house all on fire about him? It is his kingdom, and how can his laws be obeyed, if all his subjects be in a hubbub one against another? His Church are a people that are called out of the world to be a praise to him in the sight of the nations; as *Peter* saith, *God did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name,* Acts xv. 14; that is, a people for his honour: But a wrangling, divided people would be little credit to the name of Christ; yea, such, where they are found (and where, alas! are they not to be found?) they are to the name of Christ, as to lead men into temptation to think basely of Christ and his gospel, *Job* xvii. 23. Christ prays his people may be made perfect in one, and mark his argument, *that the world may know that thou hast sent me;* whose heart bleeds not to hear Christ blasphemed at this day by so many black-mouths? And what hath opened them more than the Saint's divisions?

SECT. II.

The second argument shall be taken from yourselves; for your own sakes live in peace and unity. Consider your obligations to love and unity, your relations call for it. If believers, *Paul* tells you your kindred, Gal. iii. 27. *Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.* Not only children of God, so are all by creation, but by faith in Jesus Christ also. Christ he is the foundation of a new *Brotherhood* to believers. O! Christians, consider how near you are set one to another; you were conceived in the same womb of the Church, begot by the same seed of the word to this new creation, whereby, as one saith, you become brethren of the whole blood; and, therefore, there should be the more unity and dear affection among you than any other. *Joseph*'s heart went out more to *Benjamin* than any of the rest of his brethren, because he was his brother, both by father and mother. If you fall out, who shall agree? What is it that can rationally break your peace? Those things which used to be bones of contention, and occasion

occasion squabbling among other brethren, Christ hath taken care to remove; so that of all others, your quarrellings are most childish, yea, sinful; sometimes one child finds himself grieved at the partiality of his parent's affection, more set on some others than himself; and this makes him envy them, and they despise him: But there is no such fondling in God's family, all are dear alike to Christ, Eph. v. 2. *Walk in love, as Christ hath loved us, and hath given himself for us;* that is, for one as well as another. Christ in the Church is like to the soul in the body; he is *totus in toto, & totus in qualibet parte.* Every member in Christ hath whole Christ, his whole heart and love, as if there were none besides himself to enjoy it.

Again, Among men, though the father shews not so much partiallity in his affection, yet often great inequality in the distribution of his estate; though all are children, yet not all heirs, and this sows the seed of strife among them—as *Jacob* found by woful experience. But Christ hath made his will so, that they are all provided for alike; called therefore the *common salvation,* Jude iii. and *the inheritance of the Saints in light,* Col. i. 12. All may enjoy their happiness without justling with, or prejudicing one another, as millions of people who look on the same sun, and at the same time, and none stand in another's light; methinks that speech of Christ looks a little this way, John xvii. 22. *The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one.* By glory there I would understand Heaven's glory principally; now saith Christ, *I have given it*; that is, in reversion, I have given it them; not this or that favourite, but them, I have laid it out as the portion of all sincere believers; and why? *that they may be one;* that all squabbles may be silenced, and none may envy another for what he hath above him, when he sees glory is his. It is true, indeed, some difference there is in Christian's outward garb; some poor, some rich; and in common gifts also, some have more of them, some less. But are these of such weight to commence a war upon, among those that wait for the same Heaven? If the father clads all his children in the same cloth, it were sad to see them stab one another, because one hath a lace more than the other; nay, because one's lace is red, and the other's is green; for, indeed, the quarrel among Christians

Christians is sometimes, not for having less gifts than another, but becaase not the same in kind, though another as good and useful, which possibly he wants whom we envy

Secondly, Consider where you are, and among whom; are ye not in your enemies quarters; if you fall out, what do you but kindle a fire for them to warm their hands by? Ah! so would we have it, say they. The sea of their rage will weaken this bank fast enough, you need not cut it for them; the unreasonableness of the strife, betwixt *Abraham's* herdsman and *Lot's,* is aggravated by the near neighbourhood of the Heathens to them. Gen. xiii. 7. *And there was a strife between Abraham's herdsman, and the herdsman of Lot's cattle. And the Canaanite, and the Perrizzite dwelled in the land* To fall out while these idolaters looked on, this put themselves and their religion both to shame. And I pray who have been in our land all the while the people of God have been scuffling? Those that have curiously observed every uncomely behaviour among them, and told all the world of it; such as have wit and malice enough to make use of it for their wicked purposes. The stand on tip-toes to be at work, only we are not yet quite laid up and disabled (by the soreness of those our wounds, which we have given ourselves) from withstanding their fury. They hope it will come to that; and then they will cure us of our own wounds, by giving one if they can, that shall go deep enough to the heart of our life, gospel and all. O Christians, shall *Herod* and *Pilate* put you to shame? They clapped up a peace to strenghten their hands against Christ; and will not you unite against your common enemy? It is an ill time for mariners to be fighting, when an enemy is boring a hole at the bottom of their ship.

Thirdly, Consider the sad consequences of your contentions.

First, You put a stop to the growth of grace. The body may as well thrive in a fever, as the soul prosper, when on a flame with strife and contention. No, first this fire in the bones must be quenched, and brought into its natural temper: and so must this unkindly heat be slacked amoug Christians, before either can grow. I pray observe that place, *Eph.* iv. 15. *But speaking the truth in the love* (on being sincere in love) *may grow up into him in all things.* The *Apostle* is upon a cure, shewing how souls that at present

sent are weak, and their grace rather wan and withered than growing, may come to thrive and flourish; and the receipt he gives, is a composition of these two rare drugs, sincerity and love; preserve these, and all will do well, as *ver.* 16. where the whole body is said *to edify itself in love.* There may be preaching, but no edifying without love. Our times are a sad comment upon this text..

Secondly, You cut off your trade with Heaven at the throne of grace; you will be little in prayer to God I warrant you, if much in squabbling with your brethren. It is impossible to go from wrangling to praying with a free spirit. And if you should be so bold as to knock at God's door, you are sure to have cold welcome, Matt. v. 24. *Leave thy gift before the Altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* God will not have the incense of prayer put to such strange fire; nor will he eat of our leavened bread, that taste of any performance soured with malice and bitterness of spirit. First, the peace was renewed, and a covenant of love and friendship struck between *Laban* and *Jacob,* Gen. xxxi. 44. and then *ver.* 54. *Jacob offered sacrifice upon the Mount, and called his brethren to eat bread.* The very *Heathens* thought no serious business could be well done by quarreling spirits. Therefore the *Senators* of *Rome* used to visit the temple dedicated *Jovi depositorio,* because there they did *deponere inimicitias,* lay down all their feuds and controversies, before they went into the Senate to consult of state-affairs; durst not they go to the Senate till friends? and dare we go up to God's altar, bow our knees to him in prayer, while our hearts are roiled with anger, envy and malice? O God humble us.

Thirdly, As we cut off our trade with Heaven, so with one another; when two countries fall out, whose great interest lies in their mutual traffick, they must needs both pinch by the war. Truly, the Christian's great gains come in by their mutual commerce; and they are the richest Christians commonly, who are seated with the greatest advantage for this trade. As no nation hath all their commodities of their own growth, but needs some merchandize with others; so there is no Christian that could well live without borrowing from his brethren. There is that *which every joint supplieth according to the effectual working in the measure*

measure of every part, Eph. iv. 16. *Paul* himself is not so well laid in, but he hopes to get something more than he hath from the meanest of those he preached to; he tells the Christian's at *Rome,* chap. i. he longs as much to see them, as to impart some spiritual gift to them, *ver.* 11. so saith he, *that I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me,* ver. 12. yea, he hopes to be *filled with their company,* Rom. xv. 24. As a man is filled with good cheer, he hopes to make a feast of their company. Now contentions and divisions spoil all intercourse among believers. They are as baneful to Christian communion, as a great pestilence or plague is to the trade of a market town. Communication flows from communion, and communion that is founded upon union. The church grows under persecution; that sheds the seed all over the field, and brings the gospel, where else it had not been heard of. But divisions and contentions, like a furious storm, washes the seed out of the land.

Fourthly, You not only hazard the decay of grace, but growth of sin. Indeed, it shews there is more than a little corruption got within doors already, but it opens the door to much more, James iii. *If ye have bitter envying, and strife, glory not;* that is, do not think you are such good Christians. This stains all your other excellencies; had ye the knowledge and gifts of holy angels, yet this would make you look more like Devils than them; he gives the reason, ver. 16. *for where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. Moses* himself, when his spirit was a little hot, *spake unadvisedly with his lips.* It must needs be an occasion of much sinning, which renders it impossible for a man while in his distemper to do any one righteous action. *The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God,* James i. 20. Now what a sad thing is it for Christians to stay long in that temper in which they can do no good to one another, but provoke lust?

Fifthly, They are prognostics of judgment coming. A lowring sky speaks foul weather at hand, and mariners look for a storm at sea, when the waves begin to swell, and utter a murmuring noise. Hath there been nothing like these among us? What can we think, but a judgment is breeding by the lowring countenances of Christians, their swellings of heart, and discontented passions vented from their

their spirits, like the murmuring of waters, or rumbling of thunder in the air before a tempest? When children fight and wrangle, now is the time they may expect their father to come, and part them with his rod, Mal. iv. 6. *He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I smite the earth with a curse;* strife and contention set a people next door to a curse. God makes account he brings a heavy judgment upon a people, when himself leaves them. If the master leaves the ship, it is near sinking indeed. These smoke him out of his own house. *Be of one mind* (saith the Apostle), *live in peace, and the God of peace shall be with you,* 2 Cor. xiii: 11. implying, if they did not live in peace, they must not look to have his company long with them. God was coming in *Moses* with a great salvation to the *Israelites;* and, as earnest of the good services he was to do for them, he begins to make peace between two discontented brethren as they strove; but his kindness was not accepted, and this was the occasion of many years misery more that they endured in *Egypt. Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Midian,* Acts vii. 29. *And no news of deliverance for the space of forty years after,* ver. 30. And have not our dissensions, or rather our rejecting those overtures, which God, by men of healing spirits hath offered for peace, been the cause why mercy hath fled so fast from us, and we left to groan under those sad miseries that are upon us at this day? and who knows how long? O! who can think what a glorious morning shone upon England in that famous Parliament begun 1640, and not weep and weep again to see our hopes for a glorious reformation, that opened with them, now shut up in blood and war, contention and confusion? Miseries too, like the fire and brimstone that fell from Heaven upon those unhappy cities of the plain.

SECT. III.

Thirdly, Labour for peace and unity for others sake. I mean those who are wicked and ungodly, among whom ye live; we are not, saith *Austin,* to despair of the wicked,

but do our utmost they may be good and godly. Because God calls his number out of the heap and multitude of the ungodly world. Now, no more winning means to work upon them, and pave a way for their conversion, than to commend the truths and ways of God to them, by the amiableness of your love and unity that profess the same. This is the cummin-seed that would draw souls like doves to the windows. This is the gold to overlay the Temple of God (the church) so as to make all in love with its beauty. Every one is afraid to dwell in a house haunted with evil spirits. And hath Hell a worse than the spirit of division? O Christians, agree together, and your number will increase. It is said, *Acts* ii. 46. *They continued daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.* And mark what follows, *verse* 47. *They had favour with all the people, and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*

The world was so great a stranger to love and peace, that it was amused, and set of considering what heavenly doctrine that was which could so molify men's hearts, plain their rugged natures, and join them so close in love together, and were the more easily persuaded to adopt themselves into that true family of love. But alas, when this gold became dim, then the gospel lost credit in the world, and the doctrine of it came under more suspicion in their thoughts, who seeing such clefts gape in her walls, were more afraid to put their heads under its roof. *Cant.* ii. 7. *I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor wake my love till he please.* Master *Cotton* on the place, *by the roes and hinds of the field* (which are fearful creatures, easily scared away, yet otherwise willing to feed with the sheep) takes the *Gentiles* to be meant, inclinable to embrace the *Jewish* religion, but very soon scared away by the troublesome state of it, or any offensive carriage of the *Jews*. And what more offensive carriage than divisions and strifes? see them joined together, *Rom.* xvi. 17. *Mark them which cause divisions and offences.* If divisions, then there are sure to be offences taken, and many possibly hardened in their sins thereby. Do not your hearts tremble to lay the stumbling block for any

to

to break his neck over? to roll the stone over any poor sinner's grave, and seal him down in it, that he never have a resurrection to grace here, or glory hereafter? As you would keep yourselves free of the blood of those that die in their sins, take heed of lending any thing by your division to the hardening of their souls in their impenitency.

SECT. IV.

Fourthly, The fourth sort of peace, is a peace with all the creatures, even the most fierce and cruel I call it a peace of indemnity and service. This *Adam* in his primitive state enjoyed; while he was innocent, all the creatures were innocent and harmless to him; the whole creation was at his service; no mutinous principle was found in any creature that did incline it in the least to rebel against him. When God sent the beasts of the field, and fowls of the air to receive names from him, it was that they should do their homage to him, and acknowledge him as their Lord, and that he, by exercising that act of authority over them (in giving them names) might have an experiment of his perfect (though not absolute and independent) dominion over them. But no sooner did man withdraw his allegiance from God, but all the creatures (as if they had been sensible of the wrong man by his apostacy had done his and their maker (by whose patent he held his lordship over them) they presently forgot their subjection to him, yea, take up arms in their supreme Lord's quarrel against apostate man. And thus they continue in array against him, till God and man meet together again in a happy covenant of peace; and then the commission which God in wrath gave them against rebel man is called in; and in the same day that God and the believing soul are made friends; the war ends between him and them, *Hosea* ii. 18. *In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the fields and with the fowls of the heaven*; and mark the day from whence this covenant bears date. *In that day*, that is, in the day that *I betroth thee unto me*; so that our peace with the creatures comes in by our peace with God. And this being the blessing of the

gospel, so must that also. But as our peace with God is not so perfectly enjoyed in this life, but God hath left himself a liberty to chastise his reconciled ones, and that sharply too, so our peace with the creatures doth not hinder, but that they may be (yea often are) the rod which God useth to correct them with. The water may drown one Saint, and the fire consume another to ashes, and yet these creatures at peace with these Saints, because they are not sent by God in wrath against them, for any real hurt that God means them thereby. This indeed was the commission that he gave all the creatures against apostate man, as part of his curse for his sin. He sent the creatures against him (as a *Prince* doth his *General* against a company of traitors that are in arms against him) with authority to take vengeance on them for their horrid rebellion against their maker. But now the commission is altered, and runs in a more comfortable strain. Go fire, and be the chariot in which a Saint may be brought home from earth to me in heaven's glory. Go water, waft another; and so of all the rest. It is true they are sharp corrections as to the present smart they bring; but they are mercies, and do a friendly office in the intention of God, and happy issue to the believer. *All things work together for good to them that love God,* Rom. viii. 28. And the *Apostle* speaks it as a common principle well known among the Saints, *We know that all things work, &c.* As if he had said, Where is the Saint that doth not know this? And yet it were happy for us if we knew it better; some of us would then pass our days more comfortably than now we do. But I intend not a discourse of this; let brevity here make amends for prolixity in the former.

CHAP. XIV.

The Duty of a Christian to stand shod with a Heart prepared for all Sufferings, with one Reason of the Point.

WE come to the third enquiry from these words.

SECT.

SECT. I.

Quest. What is meant by *this preparation of the Gospel of peace*, with which the Christian's feet are to be shod? or thus, What grace doth this preparation, with which we are to be shod, signify? And why called the preparation of the gospel of peace?

Ans. As for the grace held forth by this *preparation of the Gospel, &c.* I find great variety in the apprehensions of the learned, and indeed variety rather than contrariety. I shall therefore spare mentioning them (many of which you may find in a bunch collected by the Reverend Doctor *Gouge* upon the place with his thoughts upon them) and crave the boldness to lay down (with due respect to others) the apprehensions I have had thereon; which I conceive will rather amplify than thwart their sense. Now what this preparation is, will best appear by considering the part it is designed for; and that is the foot, the only member in the body to be shod, and the piece of armour it is compared to, and that is the *Soldier's shoe*, which, (if right) is to be of the strongest make, being not so much intended for finery as defence; and that so necessary, that for want of it alone, the soldier in some cases is disabled for service; as when he is called to march far on hard ways, and those (may be) strewed with sharp stones; how long will he go (if not shod) without wounding or foundering? or if the way be good, but the weather bad, and his feet not fenced from the wet and cold, they are not so far from the head, but the cold got in them may strike up to that; yea, bring a disease on the whole body, which will keep him on his bed when he should be in the field: as many almost are surfeited as slain in armies. Now what the foot is to the body, that the will is to the soul. The foot carries the whole body, and the will the soul; yea, the whole man, body and soul also. We go whither our will sends us. And what the shoe is to the foot, that preparation, or if you please a readiness and alacrity is to the will. The man whose feet are well shod fears no ways, but goes through thick and thin; foul or fair, stones or straws, all are alike to him that is well shod, while the bare-footed man,

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or slender shoed, shrinks when he feels the wet, and shricks when he lights upon a sharp stone. Thus when the will and heart of a man is prompt, and ready to do any work, the man is as it were shod and armed against all trouble and difficulty which he is to go over in the doing of it. They say, the *Irish* tread so light on the ground, that they will run over some bogs, wherein any other would stick or sink. A prepared ready heart I am sure will do this in a spiritual sense; none can walk, where he can run; he makes nothing of afflictions, yea, persecutions, but goes singing over them; *David* never so merry as in the cave, *Psal.* lvii. and how came he so? *My heart is prepared, my heart is prepared,* (saith he) *I will sing and give praise.* If *David*'s heart had not been shod with this preparation, he would not have liked the way so well he was in; you would have had him sing to another tune, and heard him quarrel with his destiny, or fall out with his profession, that had put him to so much trouble, and driven him from the pleasures of a prince's court, to hide himself under ground in a cave from those that hunted for his precious life. He would have spent his breath rather in pitying and bemoaning himself, than in praising of God: An unprepared heart, that is not well satisfied with its work or condition, hangs back, and though it may be brought to submit to it with much ado, yet it is but as a foundered horse on a stony way, who goes in pain every step, and would oft be turning out of the path if the bit and whip did not keep him in.

Quest. 2. But why is it called *the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace?*

Answ. Because the gospel of peace is the great instrument by which God works the will and heart of man into this readiness and preparation to do or suffer what he calls to. It is the business we are set about, when preaching the gospel, to make a *willing people* Psal. cx. *To make ready a people prepared for the Lord,* Luke 1. As a captain is sent to beat up his drum in a city, to call in a company that will voluntarily list themselves to follow the prince's wars, and be in readiness to take the field, and march at an hour's warning: Thus, the *Gospel* comes to call over the hearts of men to the foot of God, to stand ready for his service whatever it costs them; now this it doth as it is a *Gospel of Peace.*

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It brings the joyful tidings of peace concluded betwixt God and man by the blood of Jesus; and this is so welcome to the trembling conscience of poor sinners, who before melted away their sorrowful days in a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation from the Lord to devour them as his adversaries; that no sooner the report of a peace concluded betwixt God and them sounds in their ears by the preaching of the gospel, and is certainly confirmed to be true in their own consciences by the spirit, who is sent from Heaven to seal it to them, and give them some sweet gust of it, by shedding abroad the sense of it in their souls; but instantly there appears a new life in them, that they who before were so fearful and shy of every petty trouble, as to start and boggle at the thought of it (knowing it could bring no good news to them) are now (shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace) able to go out to meet the greatest sufferings that are, or can be on the way towards them, and say undauntedly to them (as once Christ did to those that came with swords and staves to attack him) *Whom seek ye? Being justified by faith, we have peace with God* (saith the apostle) *Rom.* v. 1. And this mightily doth work; even *to make them glory in tribulations.* The words opened afford these two points.

Doct. 1. It is our duty to be always prepared, and ready to meet with any trial, and endure any hardship which God may lay out for us in our Christian warfare.

Doct. 2. The peace which the gospel brings and speaks to the heart, will make the creature ready to wade through any trial or trouble that meets him in his Christian course.

SECT. II.

Doct. 1. We ought to maintain a holy readiness of spirit to endure any hardship which God may lay out for us in our Christian course; Saints are sure to want no trials and sufferings: these (as Christ saith of the poor) *we shall have always with us.* The bloody sweat which Christ felt, signified (saith *Augustine*) the sufferings which in his whole mystical body he should endure. Christ's whole body was lift upon the cross, and no member must now look to escape the cross;

cross; and when the cross comes, how must we behave ourselves towards it? It will not speak us Christians, that we are merely passive, and make no notorious resistance against the will of God; but we must be active in our patience, by shewing a holy readiness and alacrity of spirit to be at God's ordering, though it were to be led down into the very chambers of death itself. That *Epitaph* would not become a Christian's grave-stone, which I have heard was engraved upon one's tomb, and might too truly on most that die, *Here lies one against his will.* Holy *Paul* was of a better mind, *Acts* xxi. 13. *I am ready, not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus.* But may be this was but a flourish of his colours, when he knew the enemy to be far enough off; he may yet live to change his thoughts, when he comes to look death in the face. No, what he hath said he stands to, 2 *Tim.* iv. *I am ready, now ready, to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand*; he speaks of it, as if it were already done; indeed he had already laid his head on the block, and was dead before the stroke was given, not with fear, as some have been, but with a free resignation of himself to it; and if a malefactor be dead in a law-sense, as soon as the sentence is out of the judge's mouth, though he lives some weeks after; then I am sure in a gospel-sense we may say, those are dead already, that are ready to die, that have freely put themselves under the sentence of it in their own willingness. And this alacrity and serenity that was on *Paul*'s spirit, was the more remarkable, if we consider how close he stood to his end. Indeed some from the *Greek* word, which properly signifies a libation or drink-offering, conceive that *Paul* knew the very kind of death which he should suffer, namely, beheading; and that he alludes to the pouring out of blood or wine, used in sacrifice, which did best illustrate the nature of his death, *viz.* the pouring out of his blood; which he did as willingly offer up in the service of Christ and his church, as they did their wine in a drink-offering to the Lord. We shall now give some rational account of the point, why we are to be ready and prompt at suffering-work. The reasons shall fall under two heads. First, taken from Christ, for whom we suffer. The second from the excellency of such a temper, as this readiness to endure any hardship imports.

SECT.

SECT. III.

First, He commands it. Indeed this frame of spirit is implied in every duty; that qualification, which (like the stamp on coin) makes it current in God's account, *Tit.* iii. 1. *Put them in mind*, saith the apostle, *to be ready to every good work;* be it active or passive, they must be ready for it, or else all they do is to no purpose. The word there is the same with this in the text, and is taken from a vessel that is fashioned and fitted for the use the master puts it to; thus God expects we should keep our hearts clean from the defilements of sin, and our affections whole and entire for himself; that they be not lent out to the creature, nor broken and bartered by any inordinancy of delight in them, lest we should be to seek when he calls us to do or suffer; or be found very unprepared, without much ado to set us right, and make us willing for the work, 2 *Tim.* ii. 21. *If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.* Now, as God commands this readiness in all, so especially in suffering work, *Luke* ix. 23. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me.* These words may be called the Christian's indenture: every one that will be Christ's servant, must seal this, before he hath leave from Christ to call him Master; wherein you see the chief provision Christ makes, is about suffering work, as that which will most try the man. Now observe how careful Christ is to engage the heart in this work; he will have his servants not only endure the hardship of his service, but shew their readiness in it also; four remarkable passages are put in for this purpose.

First, *He must deny himself*, that is, deliver up his own will out of his own hands, and from that day that he enters into Christ's service, acknowledge himself not to be at his own disposal; whatever Christ bears, he cannot, to hear his servants (when sent by him on any business) say, *I will not.*

Secondly, He tells them the worst at first, and chooseth to speak of the cross they must bear, rather than the crown they shall at last wear; and withal, that he expects they should not only bear it (this the wicked do full sore against their wills) but also take it up. Indeed he doth not bid them make the cross, run themselves into trouble of their own head, but he will have them take that up which he makes for them; that is, not step out of the way by any sinful shift to escape any trouble, but to accept of the burthen God lays for them, and go chearfully under it, yea, thankfully, as if God did us a favour to employ us in any suffering for him; we do not take so much pains as to stoop to take up that which is not worth something; Christ will have his people take up the cross, as one does to take up a pearl that lies on the ground before them.

Thirdly, This they must do every day, *and take up his cross daily*; when there is none on his back, he must carry one in his heart, that is, continually be preparing himself to stand ready for the first call; as porters stand waiting when their masters have any burthen for them to carry. Thus *Paul* professeth he died daily; how, but by a readiness of mind to die? He set himself in a posture to bid God's messenger welcome whenever it came. This indeed is to take up the cross daily; when our present enjoyments do not make us strange to, or fall out with the thoughts of future trials. The *Jews* were to eat the passover with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand, and all in haste, *Exod.* xii. 11. When God is feasting the Christian with present comforts, he must have his gospel shoes on, he must not set to it as if he were feasting at home, but as at a running meal on his way in an inn, willing to be gone, as soon as he is refreshed a little for his journey.

Fourthly, When the cross is on, what then? Then he must follow Christ; not stand still and fret, but follow; not be drawn and hauled after Christ, but follow, as a soldier his captain, voluntarily; Christ doth not as some generals, drive the country before him, and make his servants fight whether they will or no, but he invites them in, *Hos.* ii. 14. *I will allure her into the wilderness.* Indeed a gracious heart follows Christ into the wilderness of affliction, as willingly

lingly as a lover his beloved into some solitary private arbor or bower, there to sit and enjoy her presence. Christ useth arguments in his word, and by his Spirit so satisfactory to the Christian, that he is very willing to follow him; as the patient, who at first shrinks and draws back, when the physician talks of cutting or bleeding, but when he hath heard the reasons given by him why that course must be taken, and is convinced it is the best way for his health, then he very freely puts forth his arm to the knife, and thanks the physician for his pains.

SECT. IV.

Secondly, Christ deserves this frame of spirit at our hands: take two particulars wherein this will appear.

First, His readiness to endure sorrow and trouble for us. When God called him to the work of Mediatorship, he found the way laid with sharper stones than we do in the road that is appointed us to walk in. He was was to tread upon all manner of sorrows, and those edged with the wrath of God; this was the sharpest stone of all (which he hath taken out of our way) and yet how light did he go upon the ground? O had not his feet been well shod with love to our souls, he would soon have turned back, and said the way was impassible; but on he goes and blunts not; never did we sin more willingly, than he went to suffer for our sin. *Lo, I come,* (saith he to his father) *I delight to do thy will, O my God, thy law is within my heart,* Psalm xl. 7.— O what a full consent did the heart of Christ rebound to his Father's call? like some echo that answers what is spoken twice or thrice over. Thus, when his Father speaks to him to undertake the work of saving poor lost man, he doth not give a bare assent to the call, but trebles it; *I come, I delight to do thy will, yea, thy law is in my heart.* He was so ready, that before his enemies laid hands on him, he as it were, laid hands on himself, in the instituting of the Lord's supper, and there did sacramentally rend the flesh of his own body, and broach his own heart to fill that cup with his precious blood, which with his own hand he gave them, that they might not look upon his death now at hand as a mere butchery

butchery from the hand of man's violence, but rather as a sacrifice, wherein he freely offered up himself to God for them and all believers. And when the time was come that the sad tragedy should be acted, he knowing the very place where the traitor with his black guard would come, goes out and marcheth into the very mouth of them. O what a shame were it, that we should be unwilling to go a mile or two of rugged way, to bear so sweet a Saviour company in his sufferings? *Could ye not watch with me one hour?* said Christ to *Peter*, Matt. xxvi. 40. Not with me, who am now going to meet with death itself, and ready to bid the bitterest pangs of it welcome for your sakes? not with me?

Secondly, Christ deserves this readiness to meet any suffering he lays out in his new providence for us, if we consider his tender care over his Saints, when he calls them into a suffering condition. Kind masters may well expect chearful servants. The more tender the captain is over his soldiers, the more prodigal they are of their own lives at his command. And it were strange, if Christ's care, which deserves most, should meet with less ingenuity in a Saint. Now Christ's care appears,

First, In proportioning the burthen to the back he lays it on. That which overloads one ship, and would sink her, is but just balance for another of greater burthen. Those sufferings which one Christian cannot bear, another sails trim and even under. The weaker shoulder is sure to have the lighter carriage. As *Paul* burthened some churches (which he knew more able) to spare others; so Christ, to ease the weaker Christian, lays more weight on the stronger. *Paul laboured more abundantly than them all*, he tells us, 1 *Cor.* xv. 10. But why did Christ so unequally divide the work? observe the place, and you shall find that it was but necessary to employ that abundant grace he had given him. *His grace*, saith he, *which was bestowed on me, was not in vain, but I laboured more, &c.* There was so much grace poured into him, that some of it would have been in vain, if God had not found him more to do and suffer than the rest. Christ hath a perfect rate by him of every Saint's spiritual estate, and according to this all are assessed, and so none are oppressed. *Paul* laid down his head on the block for the

the cause of Christ, as freely as some (and those true, but weak Christians) would have done a few pounds out of their purse. He endured death with less trouble than some could have done reproach for Christ. All have not a martyr's faith, nor all the martyr's fire.

Secondly, The consolation he gives them then above other of their brethren, that are not called out to such hard service. That part of an army which is upon action in the field, is sure to have their pay (if their masters have any money in their purse) yea, sometimes, when their fellows left in their quarters are made to stay. I am sure, there is more spiritual joy and comfort to be found in Christ's camp (among his suffering ones) than their brethren at home in peace and prosperity, ordinarily can shew. What are the promises, but vessels of cordial wine, tunned on purpose against a groaning hour, when God usually broacheth them? *Call upon me* (saith God) *in the day of trouble*, Psal. l. 15. and may we not do so in the day of peace? yes, but he would have us most bold with him in the day of trouble — None find such quick dispatch at the throne of grace as suffering Saints. *In that day I cried* (saith *David*) *thou answerest me, and gavest me strength in my soul*, Ps. cxxxviii. 3. He was now at a strait, and God comes in haste to him. Though we may make a well friend stay (that sends for us) yet we will give a sick friend leave to call us up at midnight. In such extremities we usually go with the messenger that comes for us; and so doth God with the prayer; *Peter* knocked at their gate (who were assembled to seek God for him) almost as soon as their prayer knocked at Heaven's gate in his behalf. And truly it is no more than needs, if we consider the temptations of an afflicted condition; we are prone then to be suspicious, our best friends forget us, and to think every stay a delay, and neglect of us; therefore God chooseth to shew himself most kind at such a time. *As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation aboundeth also by Christ*, 2 Cor. i. 5. As man laid on trouble, so Christ laid in consolation: both tides rose and fell together; when it was spring tide with him in affliction, it was so with him in his joy; we relieve the poor, as their charge increaseth, so Christ comforts his people, as their troubles multiply; and now (Christian) tell me, doth not my

my dear Lord deserve a ready spirit in thee to meet any suffering with, for, or from him, who gives his sweetest comforts, where his people use to expect their saddest sorrows? Well may the servant do his work chearfully, when his master is so careful of him, as with his own hands to bring him his breakfast into the fields. The Christian stays not till he comes to Heaven for all his comfort. There indeed shall be the full supper, but there is a breakfast (Christian) of previous joy (more or less) which Christ brings to thee into the field, and shall be eaten on the place where thou endurest thy hardship.

Thirdly, In the seasonable succours which Christ sends to bring them off safe. He doth not only comfort them in, but helps them out of all their troubles. There is ever a door more than the Christian sees in his prison, by which Christ can with a turn of his hand, open a way for his Saints escape. And what can he desire more? And what better security can we desire for this, than the promise of the great God, with whom to lie is impossible? And I hope the credit which God hath in his people's hearts, is not so low but a bill under his hands will be accepted at first sight by them, in exchange of what is dearer to them, life itself not excepted. Look at thyself when thou hast to do with others: none so firm, but may crack under thee, if thou layest too much weight on them; one would have thought so worthy a captain as *Uriah* was, might have trusted his general, yea, his prince (and he so holy a man as *David* was) but he was unworthily betrayed by them both into the hands of death. Man may, the Devil to be sure will, leave all in the lurch that do this work. But if God sets thee on, he will bring thee off; never fear, *Look thee to that* from his lips, when thy faithfulness to him hath brought thee into the briars; he that would work a wonder, rather than let a run-away *Prophet* perish in his sinful voyage (because a good man is the main) will heap miracle upon miracle, rather than thou shalt miscarry and sink in thy duty; only be not troubled if thou art cast over-board (like *Jonah*) before thou seest the provision which God makes for thy safety; it is ever at hand, but sometimes lies close and out of the creatures sight, like *Jonah*'s whale (sent of God to ferry him to shore) under water, and the *Prophet* in its belly, before he knew where it was;

was; that which thou thinkest comes to devour thee, may be the messenger which God sends to bring thee safe to land. Is not thy shoe, Christian, yet on? art thou not yet ready to march? canst fear any stone now can hurt thy foot through so thick a sole?

CHAP. XV.

The second Reason taken from the Excellency of this Frame of Spirit.

Reason 2. THE second reason is taken from the excellency of the frame of spirit; which will appear in divers particulars.

SECT. I.

First, This readiness of heart to stoop to the cross evidenceth a gracious heart; and a gracious spirit is an excellent spirit; flesh and blood never made any willing to suffer for God or from God; he that can do this, hath that *other spirit* with *Caleb*, Numb. xiv. 24. which proves him of a higher descent than this world; a carnal heart can neither act nor suffer freely. The will is no more free, than it is made free by grace. So much flesh is left in a Saint, so much unwillingness to come to God's foot; and therefore where there is nothing but flesh, there can be nothing but unwillingness. He that can find his heart following God in his command or providence chearfully, *may know who hath been there,* this is a line which none but God could draw on thy own soul. The midwives said to the *Israelitish* women, they were not like the *Egyptians* in bringing forth their children, *for they were lively, and delivered ere the midwives could*

could come at them, Exod i 19. Truly, thus lively and ready is the gracious heart in any thing it is called to do or suffer. It is not delivered with so much difficulty of a duty as of a carnal heart, which must have the help and midwifery of some carnal arguments, or else it sticks in the birth: but the gracious heart hath done before these come to lend their helping hand; pure love to God, obedience to the call of his command, and faith on the security of his promise, facilitate the work, that be it never so burthensome to the flesh, yet it is not grievous to the spirit; that is ever ready to say, *Thy will be done and not mine.* The *Apostle* makes this free submission to the disposure of God's afflicting hand to evidence a son's spirit, *Heb.* xii. 7. *If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons.* Observe, he doth not say, *if you be chastened,* but *if you endure chastening.* Naked suffering doth not prove sonship, but to endure it, so as not to sink in our courage, or shrink from under the burthen God lays on, but readily to offer our shoulder to it, and patiently carry it, looking with a cheerful eye at the reward, (not to throw it off) but to have it taken off by that hand which laid it on; this shews a child-like spirit, and the evidence thereof must needs be a comfortable companion to the soul, especially at such a time when that *Sophister of Hell* useth the afflictions which lie upon it, as an argument to disprove its relation to God; now to have this answer to stop the liar's mouth at hand; Satan, if I be not a child, how could I so readily submit to the Lord's family discipline? This is no small mercy.

SECT. II.

Secondly, This frame of spirit makes him a free man, that hath it; and no mean price useth to be set on the head of liberty. The very birds had rather be abroad in the woods, though lean with cold and care, to pick up here and there a little livelihood, than in a golden cage with all their attendance. Now truly, there is a bondage which few are sensible of, and that is a bondage to the creature; when a man is so

so enslaved to his enjoyments and low contentments here on earth, that they give law to him, that would give law to them, and measure out his joy to him (what he shall have), little or much. Thus some are slaves to their estates, it is said, *their hearts goes after their covetousness*; that is, as the servant after the master, who dares not be from his back; their money is the master, and hath the best keeping, their heart waits on it, shall I say as a servant after his master? yea, as a dog at his master's foot; others are as great slaves to their honours; so poor spirited, that they cannot enjoy themselves, if they have not the cap and knee of all they meet; such a slave was *Haman*, the great favourite of his prince, who but he at Court? that could, at the expence of a few words, get the King's ring to seal a bloody decree for the massacring of so many thousands of innocent persons against all sense and reason of state, merely to fulfil his lust, had not this man honour enough put upon him to content his ambitious spirit? No, there is a poor Jew at the King's gate, will not make a leg to him as he goes by, and this so roils his proud stomach, that he has no joy of all his other greatness, Esther v. 13. *Yet all this availeth me nothing* (saith the poor spirited wretch) *so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the King's gate.* A third sort are as much in bondage to their pleasures, they are said to *live in pleasure on earth*, James v. 5. their life is bound up in their pleasures, as the rush grows in the mud, and the fish lives in the water; they cannot live without their pleasures; take them from their feasts and sports, and their hearts, with *Nabal*'s, die like a stone in their bosoms. Now this frame of spirit we are speaking of, breaks all these chains, and brings the Christian out of every house of bondage. It learns him to like what fare God sends; if prosperity comes, he knows how to abound, so that, if he be by a turn of providence thrown out of the saddle of his present enjoyment, his foot shall not hang in the stirrup, or his enslaved soul drag him after it with whining desires. No, through grace, he is a free man, and can spare the company of any creature, so long as he may but have Christ's with him. Blessed *Paul* stands upon his liberty; *All things are lawful to me, but I will not be brought under the power of any*, 1 Cor. vi. 12. I know the place is meant of those indifferent things concerning which there

was a dispute; but there is another sense, in which all things here below were indifferent things to that holy man; honour or dishonour, abundance or want, life or death. These were indifferent to *Paul*; he would not come under the power of any one of them. It did not become a servant of Christ, he thought, to be so tender of his reputation, as to write himself undone, when he had not this or that; not to be so in love with abundance, as not to be ready to welcome want. Not to be endeared so to life, as to run from the thoughts of death; nor to be so weary of a suffering life, as to hasten death to come for his ease.

SECT. III.

Thirdly, This readiness to suffer, as it ennobles with freedom, so it enables the Christian for service. It is a sure truth, so far and no more is the Christian fit to live serviceably, than he is prepared to suffer readily. Because there is no duty but hath the cross attending on it, and he that is offended at the cross, will not be long pleased with the service that it brings. Prayer is the daily exercise of a saint; this he cannot do as he should, except he can heartily say, *thy will be done*; and who can do that in truth, unless ready to suffer? Praising God is a standing duty; yea, *in every thing we must give thanks*, 1 Thes. v; but what if affliction befal us, how shall we tune our hearts to that note, if not ready to suffer? can we bless God and murmur? praise God and repine? The minister's work is to preach, woe to him if he do not; and if he do preach, he is sure to suffer. *Paul* had his orders for the one, and mittimus for the other together; he was sent at the same time to preach the grace of God to the world, and to endure the wrath of the world for God; so God told *Ananias*, that he should bear his name before the Gentiles, and suffer great things for his name's sake, *Acts* ix. 15, 19. And if the gospel did not please the ungrateful world out of *Paul*'s mouth, who had such a rare art of sweetening it, it were strange that any who fall so far short of his gifts, to move in the pulpit, and of his grace to win upon the hearts of men when out, should (if they mean

to

to be faithful) think to go without the wages, which the world paid him for his pains, reproach and contempt, if not downright blows of bloody persecution as he met with. And is not this shoe needful for the preacher's foot, that is to walk among so many hissing serpents? Who but a *Paul*, that had got over the fond love of life, and fear of a bloody death, would have been so willing to go into the very lion's den, and preach the gospel there, where he invited death in a manner to come unto him? I mean at *Rome* itself, the seat of cruel *Nero; So much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also, for I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ*, Rom. i, 15, 16.

In a word, It is the duty of every Christian to make a free profession of Christ. Now this cannot be done without hazard. And if the heart be not resolved in this point what to do, the first storm that riseth will make the poor man put into any creek or hole, rather than venture abroad in foul weather. John xii. 42. *Among the chief rulers also many believed on him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.* Poor souls, they could have been content, if the coast had been clear, to have put forth, but had not courage enough to bear a little scorn that threatened them. O! what folly is it to engage for God, except we be willing to lay all at stake for him? It is not worth the while to set out in Christ's company by profession, except we mean to go through with him, and not leave him unkindly when we are half way, because of a slough or two.

SECT. IV.

This readiness of spirit to suffer, gives the Christian the true enjoyment of his life. A man never comes to enjoy himself truly in any comfort of his life, till prepared to deny himself readily in it. It is a riddle; two considerations will unfold it. First, Then is that which hinders the enjoyment of our lives taken away, and that is fear; where this is, there is torment. The out-setting deer is observed to be lean (though where good food is), because always in fear. And so must they needs be in the midst of all their enjoyments,

on whose heart this vulture is continually feeding. There needs nothing else to bring a man's joy into a consumption, than an inordinate fear of losing what he hath: Let but this get hold of a man's spirit, and once become hectical, and the comfort of his life is gone past recovery. How many by this are more cruel to themselves, than it is possible their worst enemies could be to them? They, alas! when they have done their utmost, can kill them but once: But by antidating their own miseries, they kill themselves a thousand times over, even as oft as the fear of dying comes over their miserable hearts. But when once the Christian has got his piece of armour on, his soul is prepared for death and danger; he sits at the feast which God in his present providence allows him, and fears no messenger with ill news to knock at his door, yea, he can talk of his dying hour, and not spoil the mirth of his present condition; as carnal men think it does, to whom a discourse of dying in the midst of their junkets, is like the coming in of the officer to attack a company of thieves that are making merry together with their stolen goods; or like the wet cloth that *Hazael* clapped on the King his master's face; it makes all the joy which flushed out before, squat in on a sudden, that the poor creatures sit dispirited till they get out of this affrighting subject, by some divertisement or other, which only relieves them for the present, and puts them out of that particular fit this brought upon them; but leaves them deeper in slavery to such amazement of heart, whenever the same ghost shall appear. Whereas the Christian, that hath this preparation of heart, never tastes more sweetness in the enjoyments of this life, than when he dips these morsels in the meditation of death and eternity. It is no more grief to his heart, to think of the removal of these, which makes way for those far sweeter enjoyments, than it would be to one at a feast, to have the first course taken off, which he hath fed well on, that the second course of all rare sweet-meats may come, which it cannot till the other be gone. Holy *David*, Psalm xxiii. 45. brings in, as it were, a death's head with his feast. In the same breath almost he speaks of his dying, ver. 4. and of the rich feast he at present sat at through the bounty of God, ver. 5. to which he was not so tied by the teeth: But if God, that gave him this cheer, should call him from it, to look death in the face, he could do

do it, and fear no evil, when in the valley of the shadow thereof, *Psalm* xxiii 4. And what think you of the blessed apostle, *Peter?* had not he the true enjoyment of his life, when he could sleep so sweetly in a prison (no desirable place), fast bound between two soldiers (no comfortable posture) and this the very night before *Herod* would have brought him forth, in all probability, to his execution? no likely time, one would think, to get any rest, yet we find him, even there, thus, and then, so sound asleep, that the angel who was sent to give him his goal-delivery, smote him on the side to awake him, *Acts* xii. 6, 7. I question whether *Herod* himself slept so well this night, as this his prisoner did. And what was the potion that brought this holy man so quietly to rest? No doubt this preparation of the gospel of peace; he was ready to die, and that made him able to sleep; why should that break his rest in this world, which, if it had been effected, would have brought him to his eternal rest in the other?

Secondly, The more ready and prepared the Christian is to suffer from God, or for God, the more God is engaged to take care for him and of him. A good General is most tender of that soldier's life, who is least tender of it himself. The less the Christian values himself, and his interests for God's sake, the more careful God is of him, either to keep him from suffering or in it: both which are meant, Matt. xvi. 28. *Whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it. Abraham* was ready to offer up his son, and then God would not suffer him to do it. But if the Lord at any time takes the Christian's offer, and lets the blow be given, though to the severing of soul and body, he yet shews his tender care of him, by the high esteem he sets upon their blood; which is not more prodigally spilt by man's cruelty, than carefully gathered up by God; *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his Saints.*

Thus we see, that by resigning ourselves up to the disposure of God, we engage God to take care of us, and whatever befals us. And that man or woman sure must needs live comfortably, that hath the care of himself wholly taken off his own shoulders, and rolled upon God, at whose finding he now lives. The poor widow never was better off than when the prophet kept house for her; she freely parted with her little meal for the prophet's use, and a reward

ward of her faith, in crediting the message he brought from the Lord, so far as to give the bread out of her own mouth, and child's, to the prophet, she is provided for by a miracle, 1 *Kings* xvii. 12, 13. O! when a soul is once thus brought to the foot of God, that it can sincerely say, Lord, here I am, willing to deliver up all I have, and am to be at thy disposal, my will shall be done, when thou hast thy will of me. God accounts himself deeply obliged to look after that soul.

CHAP. XVI.

The Number of true Christians but little, shewn from this Readiness to suffer, that is required in every Christian, more or less, with an Exhortation to the Duty, from two Arguments.

Use 1. FIRST, Must the Christian stand thus shod in readiness to march at the call of God in any way or weather? This will exceedingly thin and lessen the number of true Christians, to what they appear to be at the first view, by the estimate of an easy, cheap profession. He that should come into our assemblies, and see them thracked and wedged in so close with multitudes flocking after the word, might wonder at first to hear the ministers sink the number of Christians so low, and speak of them as so little a company. Surely their eyes fail them, that they cannot see wood for trees; Christians that stand before them. This very thing made one of the disciples ask Christ with no little wondring at it; *Lord, are there few that shall be saved?* Luke xiii. 23. Observe the occasion of this question, *Christ*, ver. 22. *went through the cities and villages, teaching and journeying towards Jerusalem.* He saw Christ so free of his pains, to preach at every town he came, and people throng after him, with great expressions of joy that fell from

from many, ver. 17. *Then said he, Lord, are there few that shall be saved?* As if he had said, This seems very strange, and almost incredible. To see the way to Heaven strewed so thick with people, and the means of salvation in such request, and yet but few saved at last; how can this be? Now mark our Saviour's unriddling this mystery. *And he said to them,* it seems the man spoke more than his own scruple, *strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, shall seek, but shall not be able,* ver. 24. As if Christ had said, you judge by a wrong rule. If profession would serve the turn, and flocking after sermons with some seeming joy at the word, were enough to save, Heaven would soon be full: But as you love poor souls, do not bolt or try yourselves by this coarse sieve; *but strives to enter,* fight and wrestle, venture life and limb, rather than fall short of Heaven. *For many shall seek, but shall not be able;* that is, seek by an easy profession, and cheap religion, such as is hearing the word, performance of duties, and the like; of this kind there are many that will come and walk about Heaven's door, willing enough to enter, if they may do it without ruffling their pride in a crowd, or hazarding their present carnal interest by any contest and scuffle. *But they shall not be able,* that is, *to enter;* because their carnal cowardly hearts shall not be able to strive; so that take Christians under the notion of *Seekers*, and by Christ's own words, they are many; but consider them under the notion of *Strivers*, such as stand ready shod with a holy resolution, to strive even to blood, if such trials meet them in the way to Heaven, rather than not enter. And then the number of Christian soldiers will shrink like *Gideon*'s goodly host to a little troop. O! how easy were it to instance in several sorts of Christians, so called in a large sense, that have not this gospel-shoe to their foot, and therefore sure to founder and faulter, when once they be brought to go upon sharp stones!

SECT. I.

First, The ignorant Christian, what work is he like to make of suffering for Christ and his gospel? And they are not the least number in many congregations, they who have not

not so much light of knowledge in their understanding, as to know who Christ is, and what he had done for them, will they have so much heat of love as to march cheerfully after him, when every step they take must fetch blood from them, *Nabal* thought he gave a rational answer to *David*'s servants, that asked some relief of them in their present straight, when he said, *Shall I take my bread and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men I know not whence they be?* 1 *Sam.* xxv. He thought it too much to part with upon so little acquaintance. And will the ignorant person, think you, be ready to part, not only with his bread and flesh out of the pot, a little of his estate, but the flesh of his own body, if called to suffer, and all this at the command of Christ, who is one he knows not whence he is? *Paul* gives this as the reason why he suffered, and was not ashamed, for, saith he, *I know who I have believed,* 2 Tim. i. 12. Stories tell us of the *Samaritans*, a mongrel kind of people, both in their descent and religion, that when it went well with the people of God, the *Israelites,* then they would claim kindred with them and be *Jews*; but when the church of God was under any outward affliction, then they would disclaim it again. And we may the less wonder at this base cowardly spirit in them if we read the character Christ gives of them, to be a *people that worshipped they knew not what,* John iv. 22. Religion hath but loose hold of them that hath no better hold of it, than a blind man's hand.

Secondly, Carnal gospellers, who keep possession of their lusts, while they make profession of Christ. A generation these are, that have nothing to prove themselves Christians by, but their baptism, and a Christian's name which they have obtained thereby; such as were they to live among *Turks* and *Heathens,* their language and conversations, did they but conceal whence they came, would never betray them to be Christians; can it now be rationally thought that these are the men and women who stand ready to suffer for Christ and his gospel? No sure, they who will not wear Christ's yoke, will much less bear his burthen. If the yoke of the command be thought grievous, that binds them to duty, they will much more think the burthen of the cross insupportable. He that will not do for Christ, will not die for Christ. That servant is very unlike to fight to blood in his

his master's quarrel, that will not work for him so as to sweat in his service.

Thirdly, The politic professor. A fundamental article, in whose creed is to save himself, not from sin, but from danger; and therefore he studies the times more than the scriptures, and is often looking what corner the wind lies in, that accordingly he may shape his course, and order his profession, which like the hedge-hog's house, ever opens towards the warm side.

Fourthly, The covetous professor, whose heart and head are so full of wordly projects, that suffering for Christ must needs be very unwelcome to him, and find him far enough from such a disposition. You know what the *Egytians* said of the *Israelites, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in*, Exod. xiv. 13. More true it is of this sort of professors, they are entangled in the world: this wilderness hath shut them in. A man whose foot is in a snare, is as fit to walk and run, as they to follow Christ, when to do it, may prejudice their worldly interest. Our Saviour speaking of the miseries that were come on *Jerusalem*. *Wo* (saith he) *unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days*, Matt. xxiv. 19.—Because it would be more difficult for them to escape the danger by flight: The big-bellied mother being unable to fly fast enough with her child in her womb, and the nurse as unwilling to leave her dear babe behind her. But many more woes to them, who in days and trials, and persecution for the gospel, shall be found big with the world, or that give suck to any covetous inordinate affection to the creatures, such will find it hard to escape the temptation, that these will beset them with. It is impossible in such a time to keep estate and Christ together. And as impossible for a heart that is set upon the world to be willing to leave it for Christ's company.

Fifthly, The conceited professor, who hath an high opinion of himself, and is so far from an humble holy jealousy and fear of himself, that he is self-confident. Here is a man shod and prepared he thinks, but not with the right gospel-shoe. By *strength shall no man prevail*, 1 Sam. ii. 9. He that in *Queen Mary*'s days was so free of his flesh for Christ, as he said, he would see his fat melt in the fire, of which he had good store, rather than fall back to Popery, lived, poor

man, to see his resolution melt, and himself cowardly pat with his faith to save his fat. Those that glory of their valour, when they put on the harness, ever put it off with shame. The heart of man is deceitful above all things, a very *Jacob*, that will supplant its own self. He that cannot take the length of his own foot, how can he of himself fit a shoe to it?

SECT. II.

Be exhorted all you that take the name of Christ upon you, to keep this shoe of preparation on, that you may be ready at all times to follow the call of God's providence, though it should lead you into a suffering condition. Take two motives:

First, Consider, Christian, suffering work may overtake thee suddenly, before thou art aware. Sometimes orders come to soldiers for a sudden march; they have not so much as an hour's warning, but must be gone as soon as the drum beats. And so mayest thou be called out, Christian, before thou art aware, into the field, either to suffer for God, or from God. *Abraham* had little time given him to deal with his heart, and persuade it into a compliance with God, for offering his son *Isaac*. A great trial and short warning: *Take now thy son, thy only son Isaac*. Gen. xxii. 2, not a year, a month, a week hence, but *now*. This was in the night, and *Abraham* is gone early in the morning, ver. 3. How would he have entertained this strange news, if he had been then to gain the consent of his heart? but that was not now to do; God had *Abraham*'s heart already, and therefore he doth not now dispute his order, but obeys. God can make a sudden alteration in thy private affairs; Christian, how couldst thou, in thy perfect strength and health, endure to hear the message of death, if God should, before any lingering sickness hath brought thee into some acquaintance with death, say no more, but up and die, as once to *Moses*? Art thou shod for such a journey? couldst thou say, *Good is the word of the Lord?* What if in one day thou wast to step out of honour into disgrace, to be stripped of thy silks and velvets, and in vile raiment called to act a beggar's part? couldst thou rejoice that thou art made low, and find thy heart

heart ready to bless the most high? This would speak thee a soul evangelically shod indeed.

Again, God can as soon change the scene in the public affairs of the times thou livest in, as to the gospel and profession of it. May be now authority smiles on the church of God, but within a while it may frown, and the storm of persecution arise, *Acts* ix. 31. *Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea,* this was a blessed time; but how long did it last? alas, not long, *chap.* xii. there is sad news of a bloody persecution, *v.* 1. *About this time Herod the king stretched forth his hand to vex certain of the church;* in which persecution, *James,* the brother of *John,* lost his life by his cruel sword; and *Peter* in prison, like to go to the same shambles. And the church driven into a corner to pray in the night together, *v.* 12. O what a sad change is here! now in blood, who even now had rest on every side. It is observed that in islands, the weather is far more variable and uncertain, than on the continent; here you may know ordinarily what weather will be for a long time together; but in islands, in the morning we know not what weather will be before night; we have oft-times summer and winter in the same day, and all this is imputed to the near neighbourhood of the sea that surrounds them. The Saints in heaven, live (as I may say) on the continent. A blessed constancy of peace and rest there enjoyed. They may know by what peace and bliss they have at present, what they have to eternity; but here below, the church of Christ is as a floating island, compassed with the world (I mean, men of the world) as with a sea; and these sometimes blow hot, and sometimes cold; sometimes they are still and peaceable, and sometimes enraged and cruel; even as God binds up, or lets loose their wrath. Now Christian, doth it not behove thee to be always in readiness? when thou knowest not but the wind may turn into the cold corner, and the times which now favour the gospel, so as to fill the sails of thy profession with all encouragement, may on a sudden blow full on thy face, and oppose it as much, as it before countenanced it?

Secondly, Consider if thy feet be not shod with a preparation to suffer for Christ here on earth, thy head cannot be crowned in heaven, *Rom.* viii. 17. *If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.* Now mark the following words: *If so be we suffer with him, that we may*

be also glorified together; it is true, that all the Saints do not die martyrs at a stake, but every Saint must have a spirit of martyrdom, a heart prepared for suffering. God never intended *Isaac* should be sacrificed, yet he will have *Abraham* lay the knife to his throat. Thus God will have us lay our neck on the block, and be (as *Paul* said of himself) bound in the spirit, under a sincere purpose of heart to give up ourselves to his will and pleasure, which is called a *presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God,* Rom. xii. 1. That as the Jew brought the beast alive, and presented it freely before him to be done withal as God had commanded; so we are to present our bodies before God to be disposed of as he commands, both in active and passive obedience. He that refuseth to suffer for Christ, refuseth also to reign with Christ. The putting off the shoe among the Jews was a sign of a man's putting off the right of inheritance, *Deut.* xxv. 9, 10. Thus did *Elimelech*'s kinsman, when he renounced and disclaimed any right that he might have in his estate, he drew off his shoe, *Ruth* iv. 7, 8. O Christian, take heed of putting off thy gospel-shoe; by this thou dost disclaim thy right in heaven's inheritance, no portion is there laid up for any that will not suffer for Christ. The persecutions which the Saints endure for the gospel, are made an evident token to them of salvation, and that of God, *Phil.* i. 28. Surely then the denying Christ to escape suffering, is a sad token of perdition. O Sirs, is not heaven's inheritance worth enduring a little trouble for? *Naboth*'s vineyard was no great matter, yet rather than he would sell it to its worth, or change it for a better in another place, he chose to lay his life at stake by provoking a mighty king. Thou canst, Christian, venture no more for thy heavenly inheritance, than he paid for refusing to alienate his petty patrimony of an acre or two of land (thy temporal life I mean). And besides the odds between his vineyard on earth, and thy paradise in heaven, which is infinite, and suffers no proportion, thou hast this advantage also of him in thy sufferings for Christ; when *Naboth* lost his life he lost his inheritance also, that he so strove to keep; but thy persecuting enemies shall do thee this friendly office against their wills, that when they dispossess thee of thy life, they shall help thee into possession of thy inheritance.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

Six Directions for the helping on of this Spiritual Shoe.

THE great question I now expect to fall from thy mouth, Christian, is, not how thou mayest escape these troubles and trials, which, as the evil genius of the gospel do always attend it; but rather, how thou mayest have this shoe on, ready for a march, to go and meet them when they come, and cheerfully wade through them, whatever they be, or how long soever they stay with thee?

Answ. This is a question well-becoming a Christian soldier; to ask for armour wherewith he may fight, whereas the coward throws away his armour, and asks whither he may fly. I shall therefore give the best counsel I can in these few particulars.

SECT. I.

First, Look carefully to the ground of thy active obedience, that is to be sound and sincere. The same right principles whereby the sincere soul acts for Christ, will carry him to suffer for Christ, when a call from God comes. *The children of Ephriam being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle*, Psalm lxxviii. 9. Why? what is the matter? so well armed, and yet so cowardly? This seems strange, read the preceding verse, and you will cease wondering? they are called there, *a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God.* Let the armour be what it will, yea if soldiers were in a castle, whose foundation were rock, and walls brass, yet if their hearts be not right to their Prince, an easy storm will drive them from the walls, and a little scare open their gate, which hath not this bolt of sincerity on it to hold it fast. In our late wars we have seen that honest hearts within

within thin and weak works, have held the town, when no walls could defend treachery from betraying trust. O pray for sincerity in the engaging at first for God and his gospel. Be oft asking thy own soul for whom thou performest this and that. If thou canst get a satisfactory answer from thy soul here, thou mayest hope well; if faith's working hand be sincere, then its fighting hand will be valiant. That place is observable, Heb. xi. 33. *Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouth of lions, quenched the violence of fire*; and with other great things that faith enabled them to endure, as you may read in the 34, 35, and 36 verses; where note, how the power of faith, enabling the Christian to work righteousness (that is, live holily and righteously), is reckoned among the wonders of sufferings, which it strengthened them to endure. Indeed had it not done this, it would never have endured these.

SECT. II.

Secondly, Pray for a suffering spirit; this is not a common gift, which every carnal gospeller, and slighty professor hath. No, it is a peculiar gift, and bestowed but on a few sincere souls; *unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake*, Phil. i. 20. All the parts and common gifts that a man hath, will never enable him to drink deep of this cup for Christ; such is the pride of man's heart, he had rather suffer any way than this; rather from himself, and for himself, than from Christ, or for Christ; you would wonder to see sometimes how much a child will endure at his play, and never cry; this fall, and that knock, and no great matter is made of it by him, because got in a way that is pleasing to him; but let his father whip him, though it puts him not to half the smart, yet he takes on, that there is no quieting him. Thus men can bring trouble on themselves, and bite in their complaints. One can play away his estate at cards and dice, and another whore away his health, or cut off many years from his life, by beastly drunkenness, and all is endured patiently, yea, if they had their money and strength again, they should go the same way; they do not repent of what their

their lusts have cost them, but mourn they have no more to bestow upon them; their lusts shall have all they have to a morsel of bread in their cupboard, and drop of blood in their veins; yea, they are not afraid of burning in hell, as their sins martyrs. But come and ask these that are so free of their purse, flesh, soul, and all, in lust's service, to lay their estate or life for a few moments at stake in Christ's cause and his truth's, and you shall see that God is not so much beholden to them. And, therefore, pray and pray again for a suffering spirit in Christ's cause; yea, Saints themselves needs earnestly plead with God for this. Alas! they do not find suffering-work follow their hand so easily. The flesh loves to be cockered, not crucified; many a groan it costs the Christian before he can learn to love this work. Now prayer, if any means, will be helpful to thee in this particular. He that can wrestle with God, need not fear the face of death and danger. Prayer engageth God's strength and wisdom for our help; and what is too hard for the creature, that hath God at his back for his help, to do or suffer? We are bid to *count it all joy, when we fall into divers temptations*, James i. 2. Not temptations to sin, but for righteousness; he means troubles for Christ and his gospel. Ah! but might the poor Christian say, it were cause of more joy to be able to stand under these temptations, than to fall into them. Little joy would it be to have the temptation, and not the grace to endure it. True indeed; but for thy comfort, Christian, he that leads thee into this temptation, stands ready to help thee through it: *If any of you* (i. e. you sufferers chiefly) *lack wisdom, let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.* This should not much strain our faith to believe. There are not many masters so disingenuous to be found, that would twit and upbraid their servant for asking humbly their counsel in a work of peril and difficulty, which they chearfully undertake out of love to their persons, and obedience to their command; how much less needest thou fear such dealing from thy God; if thou hast so much faith and love as to venture at his command upon the sea of suffering, he will, without doubt, find so much mercy as to keep thee from drowning, if feeling thyself begin to sink, thou criest earnestly, as *Peter* did to him, *Lord save me;* wert thou even under water, praying would buoy thee up again. But

if

if thou art not a man of prayer before suffering-work come, thou wilt be able to do little at that weapon then. The proverb indeed is, He that would learn to pray, let him go to sea: But I think it were better thus, He that would go to sea (this I mean of suffering), let him learn to pray before.

SECT. III.

Thirdly, Be much in meditation of a suffering state. He will say his lesson best, when his master calls him forth, that is oftenest conning it over before-hand to himself; do by the troubles thou mayest meet with, as porters use to do with their burdens; they will lift them again and again before they take them on to their back. Thus do thou, be often lifting up in thy meditations those evils that may befal thee for Christ and his truth; and try how thou couldst endure them; set poverty, prison, banishment, fire and faggot, before thee on the one hand, and the precious truths of Christ on the other, with the sweet promises made to those that shall hold fast the word of patience held forth in such an hour of temptation. Suppose it were now thy very case, and thou wert put to thy choice which thou wouldst take; study the question seriously, till thou determinest it clearly in thy conscience; and do this often, that the arguments which flesh and blood will then be sure to use for thy pitying thyself, may not be new and unanswered; nor the encouragements and strong consolations, which the word affords, be strange, and under any suspicion in thy thoughts, when thou art to venture thy life upon their credit and truth. The promises are our garrison and fastness at such time; and we shall not find it easy to run to them in a straight, except we were acquainted with them in a time of peace. A stranger that flies to a house for refuge in a dark night, fumbles about the door, and knows not how to find the latch, his enemy, if nigh, may kill him before he can open it; but one that lives in the house, or is well acquainted with it, is not long a getting in. *Come my people* (saith God) *enter thou into thy chambers,* Isaiah xxvi. He is shewing them their lodgings in his attributes and promises before it is night, and their sufferings be come, that they may readily find the way to them in the dark.

SECT.

SECT. IV.

Fourthly, Make a daily resignation of thyself up to the will of God. Indeed this should be, as it were, the lock of the night, and key of the morning; we should open and shut our eyes with this, commending ourselves into the hands of God. This, if daily performed, not formally (as all duties frequently repeated, without the more care are like to be), but solemnly, would sweetly dispose the soul for a welcoming of any trial that can befal him. The aukwardness of our hearts to suffer, comes much from distrust. An unbelieving soul treads upon the promise, as a man upon ice; at first going upon it, it is full of fears and tumultuous thoughts, lest it should crack; now this daily resignation of thy heart, as it will give thee an occasion of conversing more with the thoughts of God's power, faithfulness, and other of his attributes (for want of familiarity with which, jealousies arise in our hearts when put to any great plunge) so also it will furnish thee with many experiences of the reality, both of his attributes and promises; which, though they need not any testimony from sense, to gain them credit, yet so much are we made of sense, so childish and weak is our faith, that we find our hearts much helped by those experiences we have had, to rely on him for the future. Look, therefore, carefully to this, every morning leave thyself and ways in God's hand, *Psalm* x. 14. and at night look again how well God hath looked to his trust, and sleep not till thou hast affected thy heart with his faithfulness, and laid a stronger charge on thy heart to trust itself again in God's keeping in the night. And when any breach is made, and seeming loss befals thee in any enjoyment, which thou hast by faith ensured of thy God, observe how God fills up that breach, and makes up that loss to thee; and rest not till thou hast fully vindicated the good name of God to thy own heart; be sure thou lettest no discontent or dissatisfaction lie upon thy spirit at God's dealings; but chide thy heart for it, as *David* did his, *Psalm* xliii. And thus doing, with God's blessing, thou shalt keep thy faith in breath for a longer race, when called to run it.

SECT. V.

Fifthly, Make self-denial appear as rational and reasonable as thou canst to thy soul; the stronger the understanding is able to reason for the equity and rationality of any work or duty, the more readily and chearfully (if the heart be honest and sincere) is it done. Suppose, Christian, thy God should call for thy estate, liberty, yea, life and all, can it seem unreasonable to thee? especially,

First, If thou considerest that he bids thee deliver his own, not thine. He lent thee these, but he never gave away the propriety of them; dost thou wrong thy neighbour, to call for that money thou lentest him a year or two past? No sure; thou thinkest he hath reason to thank thee for lending it to him, but none to complain for calling it from him.

Secondly, Consider, he doth not, indeed cannot bid thee deny so much for him, as he hath done for thee. Is reproach for Christ so intolerable, that thy proud spirit cannot brook it? why, who art thou? what great house comest thou from? see one, that had more honour to lay at stake than I hope thou darest pretend to, Jesus Christ, *who thought it no robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation.* It is pain and torment thou art afraid of? O look up to the cross where the Lord of life hung for thy sins, and thou wilt take up thy own cross more willingly, and thank God too, that he hath made thine so light and easy, when he provided one so heavy and tormenting to his beloved son.

Thirdly, Consider whatever God calls thee to deny for his truth, it is not more than he can recompense. *Moses* saw this, and that made him leap out of his honours and riches into the reproach of Christ, *for he had respect to the recompence of reward,* Heb. xi. 26. It is much that a man will deny himself strongly in, for something his hearts desires in this life. If a man be greedy of gain, he will deny himself of half the night's sleep, to plot in his bed, or rise early from it to his work; he will eat homely fare, go in vile raiment, dwell in a smoaky house for the conveniency of a shop, how men of quality will crowd themselves up into a little

little corner, though to the prejudice of their healths, and hazard sometimes of their lives, yet hope of gain recompenceth all. And now put their gains into the scale with thine, Christian, that art sure to come in by denying thyself for Christ, and ask thy soul, whether it blush not to see them so freely deny themselves of the comfort of their lives for an imaginary, uncertain, at best a short advantage.

SECT. VI.

Sixthly, Labour to carry on the work of mortification every day, to a further degree. It is the sap in the wood that makes it hard to burn, and corruption unmortified that makes the Christian loth to suffer; dried wood will not kindle sooner than a heart mortified to the lusts of the world, will endure any thing for Christ. The apostle speaks of some that were *tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection*, Heb. xi 35. They did not like the world so well, being so far on their journey to heaven (though in hard way) to be willing to come back to live in it any longer. Take heed, Christian, of leaving any worldly lust unmortified in thy soul: this will never consent thou shouldst endure much for Christ; few ships sink at sea; they are the rocks and shelves that split them: couldst thou get off the rocks of pride and unbelief, and escape knocking on the sands of fear of man, love of the world, and the like lusts, thou wouldst do well enough in the greatest storm that can overtake thee in the sea of this world. *If a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for his master's use, and prepared unto every good work*, 2 Tim. ii. 21. O that we knew the heaven that is in a mortified soul! one that is crucified to to the world and lusts of it; he hath the advantage of any other in doing or suffering for Christ, and enjoying Christ in both. A mortified soul lives out of all noise and disturbance from those carnal passions which put all out of quiet where they come. When the mortified soul goes to duty, here are not those rude and unmannerly intrusions of impertinent, carnal, yea, sinful thoughts between him and his

God. Is he to go to prison? here is not such weeping and taking on; no lust to hang about his legs, and break his heart with its insinuations; no self-love to entreat him that he would pity himself; his heart is free, got out of the acquaintance of these troubles of his peace, and a prison to him, if he may go upon so honourable an errand, as testifying to the truth; O how welcome is it to him! whereas an unmortified heart is wedged in with so great acquaintance and kindred (as I may so say) which his heart hath in the world, that it is impossible to get out of their embraces into any willingness to suffer. A man that comes into an inn in a strange place, he may rise at what time he pleaseth, and be gone as early as he pleaseth in the morning; there are none to intreat him to stay: but hard to get out of a friend's house; these like the *Levite*'s father in law, will be desiring him to stay one day, and then one more, and another after that. The mortified soul is the stranger; he meets with no disturbance (I mean comparatively) in his journey to heaven, while the unmortified one is linked in for getting on his journey in haste, especially so long as the flesh hath so fair an excuse as the foulness of the way or weather, any hardship likely to be endured for his profession. I have read of one of the *Cato*'s, that in his old age he withdrew himself from *Rome* to his country-house, that he might spend his elder years free from care and trouble. And all the *Romans* as they rode by his house used to say, *This man alone knows how to live.* I know not what art *Cato* had to disburden himself, by his retiring, of the world's cares; I am sure, a man may go into the country, and yet not leave the city behind him; his mind may be in a crowd, while his body is in the solitude of a wilderness. Alas, poor man; he was a stranger to the gospel; had he but been acquainted with this, it could have shewn him a way out of the world's crowd, in the midst of *Rome* itself, and that is by mortifying his heart to the world, both in the pleasures and troubles of it; and then that high commendation might have been given him without an hyperbole; for to speak truth, he only knows aright how to live in the world, that hath learnt to die to the world. And so much for the first point; which was, that the Christian is to stand ready for all trials and troubles that may befal him.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVIII.

Sheweth who is the Person that is shod and prepared for Sufferings, i. e. *he that hath the Gospel's Peace in his Bosom; and how this Peace doth prepare for Suffering, with the Application.*

Doct. 2. THAT he who enjoys the peace of the gospel in his bosom, is the person, and the only person, that stands shod for all ways, prepared for all troubles and trials.

SECT. I.

First, None can make a shoe to the creature's foot, so as he shall go easy on hard way, but Christ; he can do it to the creatures full content; and how? Truly no other way, than by underlaying it; or if you will, lining it with the peace of the gospel; what though the way be set with sharp stones? if this shoe go between the Christian's foot and them, they cannot much be felt. *Solomon* tells us, *The ways of wisdom* (that is Christ) *are ways of pleasantness.*— But how so, when some of them are ways of suffering? the next words resolve us, *And all her paths are peace,* Prov. iii. 17. Where there is peace, such peace as peace with God and conscience, there can want no pleasure. *David* goes merry to bed when he hath nothing for supper, but the gladness that God by this puts into his heart, and promiseth himself a better night's rest than any that are feasted with the world's cheer, *Psalm* iv. 8. *Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their wine and corn increaseth. I will both lay me down in peace and sleep.*— This same peace with God, enjoyed in the conscience, redounds to the comfort of the body. Now *David* can sleep sweetly when he lies on a hard bed; what here he saith he would do, *Psal.* iii. 5. he saith he had done, *I laid me down and slept, I awaked, for the Lord sustained me.* The title of the

the psalm tell us, when *David* had this sweet night's rest; not when he lay on his bed of down in his stately palace at *Jerusalem*, but when he fled for his life from his unnatural son *Absalom*, and possibly was forced to lie in the open field under the canopy of heaven. Truly it must be a soft pillow indeed, that could make him forget his danger; who then had such a disloyal army at his back hunting of him; yea, so transcendent is the sweet influence of this peace, that it can make the creature lie down as chearfully to sleep in the grave, as on the softest bed; you will say that child is willing that calls to be put to bed; some of the Saints have desired God to lay them at rest in their beds of dust; and that not in a pet and discontent with their present trouble, as *Job* did, but from a sweet sense of this peace in their bosoms. *Now let thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation*, was the song of old *Simeon*. He speaks like a merchant that had got all his goods on shipboard, and now desires the master of the ship to hoist sail, and be gone homewards. Indeed what should a Christian, that is but a foreigner here, desire to stay any longer for in the world, but to get this full lading in for Heaven? And when hath he that, if not when he is assured of his peace with God? This peace of the gospel, and sense of the love of God in the soul, doth so admirably conduce to the enabling of a person in all difficulties and temptations, and troubles; that ordinarily before he calls his Saints to any hard service, or hot work, he gives them a draught of this cordial wine to chear them up, and embolden them in the conflict. God calls *Abram* out of his native country, *Gen.* xii. 1. And what so fit, as a promise of Christ to bring his heart to God's foot, ver. 2, 3. A sad errand it was that sent *Jacob* to *Padan-Aram;* he fled from an angry wrathful brother, that had murdered him already in his thoughts, to an unkind deceitful uncle, under whom he should endure much hardship.

Now God comes in a sweet gospel-vision to comfort this poor pilgrim; for by *that ladder, whose foot stood on earth, and top-reached Heaven,* Christ was signified to his faith, in whom Heaven and earth meet, God and man are reconciled; and by the *moving up and down of the angels on the ladder*, the ministry of the angels, which Christ by his death and intercession procures for his Saints, that they shall tend

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on them, as servants on their master's children; so that the sum of all, is as much as if God had said, *Jacob*, thy brother, *Esau*, hates thee, but in Christ I am reconciled to thee; thy uncle, *Laban*, he will wrong thee, and deal hardly by thee, but fear him not; as I am in Christ at peace with thee, so through him thou shalt have my especial care over thee, and the guardianship of the holy angels about thee, to defend thee wherever thou goest. The *Israelites*, when ready to take their march out of *Egypt* into a desolate wilderness, where they should be put to many plunges, and their faith tried to purpose; to prepare them the more for these, he entertains them at a gospel-supper before they go forth, I mean the passover, which pointed to *Christ;* and no doubt the sweetness of this feast made some gracious souls among them (that tasted Christ in it) endure the hardship and hunger of the wilderness the more chearfully. And the same care and love did our *Lord Jesus* observe in the institution of his supper, chusing that for the time of erecting this sweet ordinance, when his disciples feet stood at the brink of a sea of sorrows and troubles, which his death, and the consequences of it, would inevitably bring upon them. Now the pardon of their sins sealed to their souls in that ordinance, must needs be welcome, and enable them to wade through their sufferings the more comfortably. Indeed, the great care which Christ took for his disciples, when he left the world, was not to leave them a quiet world to live in, but to arm them against a troublesome world; and to do this, he labours to satisfy their poor hearts with his love to them, and his father's love to them for his sake; he bequeaths unto them his peace, and empties it in the sweet consolations of it into their bosoms; for which end he tells them, as soon as he got to Heaven, he would *pray his Father to send the Comforter to them* with all speed, and sends them to *Jerusalem*, there to stay privately, and not go into the field, or openly contest with the angry world, till they received the strength and succour which the Spirit in his comforts should bring with him. By all which it doth abundantly appear, how powerful this gospel-peace is to enable the soul for suffering. Now I proceed to shew how this peace doth prepare the heart for all sufferings. And that two ways:

First,

First, As it brings along with it, and possesseth the soul (where it comes) with such glorious privileges, as lift it above all danger from any sufferings whatever, from man or Devils.

Secondly, As it is influential into the Saints graces and affections, exciting them, and making them act to such a height, as lifts the Christian above the fear of trouble and suffering.

SECT. II.

First, By possessing the believing soul of such glorious privileges as secure it from any real hurt that the worst of sufferings can do it. If a man could be assured that he might walk as safely on the waves of the sea, or in the flames of fire, as he doth in his garden, he would be no more afraid of the one, than he is to do the other; or if a man had some coat of mail secretly about him, that would undoubtedly resist all blows, and quench all shot that are sent against him, it would be no such scareful thing for him to stand in the midst of swords and guns: Now the soul that is, indeed, at peace with God, is invested with such privileges as do set it above all hurt and damage from sufferings. *The peace of God* (is said) *to garrison the believer's heart and mind,* Phil. iv. 7. He is surrounded with such blessed privileges, that he is as safe as one in an impregnable castle. A person at peace with God is a child of God. And when once the Christian comes to know his relation, and the dear love of his heavenly Father to him, afflictions from, or suffering for him, dread him not, because he knows it is inconsistent with the love of a Father, either to hurt his child himself, or suffer him to be hurt by another, if he can help it. I have often wondered at *Isaac*'s patience to submit to be bound for a sacrifice, and see the knife so near his throat, without any hideous out-cries or strugglings that we read of; he was old enough to be apprehensive of death, and the horror of it, being conceived by some to be above twenty years of age; that he was of good growth, is out of doubt by the wood which *Abraham* caused him to carry for the sacrifice; but such was the authority *Abraham* had over hi

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son, and the confidence that *Isaac* had in his father, that he durst put his life into his hands, which, had the knife been in any other hand, he would hardly have done; whoever may be the instrument of any trouble to a Saint, the rod or sword is at God's disposure; Christ saw the cup in his Father's hand, and that made him take it willingly.

Secondly, Every soul at peace with God, is heir of God. This follows his relation; *If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ*, Rom. viii. 17. This is such a transcendent privilege, that the soul to whom the joyful news of it comes, is lifted up above the amazing and affrighting fears of any suffering. The Apostle having (in the fore-named place) a little sweetened his thoughts with a few meditations on this soul-ravishing subject, see how this blessed soul is raised into a holy slighting of all the troubles of his life; *I reckon that the sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us*, ver. 18. He will not allow his own soul, or any that hath the hope of this inheritance, so far to undervalue the glory thereof, or the love of God that settled it on them, as to mention the greatness of their sufferings in any way of pitying themselves for them; as if he had said, hath God made us his heirs, and bestowed Heaven upon us in reversion? And shall we be so poor spirited, to sit down and bemoan ourselves for our present sorrows, that are no more to be compared with the glory that we are going to, than the little point of time (into which our short life, with all our sufferings are contracted) is to be compared with the vast circumference of that eternity which we are to spend in endless bliss and happiness? He is a poor man, we say, that one or two petty losses quite undoes; and he a poor Christian, that cries out he is undone by any cross in this life. We may safely conclude such an one either is heir to nothing in the other world, or hath little or no evidence for what he hath there.

Secondly, This piece prepares the Christian for sufferings, as it is influential into his graces and affections; making them act to such a height, as lifts him above the fear of any suffering.

First, This piece where it is felt, makes the Christian unconquerable in his faith. Nothing is too hard for such an one to believe that carries a pardon in his conscience, and

hath his peace with God sealed to him. *Moses* was to meet with many difficulties in that great work of conducting *Israel* out of *Egypt,* towards *Canaan*; therefore to make them all a more easy conquest to his faith, when he should be assaulted with them, God gives him at his very first entering upon his charge an experiment of his mighty power in some miracles, as the *turning his rod into a Serpent, and that again into a rod; making his hand leprous, and then restoring it again to be as sound as before,* that he might never think any thing too hard for that God to do towards their salvation and deliverance, when things seem most desperate; and how unconquerable *Moses* was after these in his faith, we see. Truly, when God speaks peace to a poor soul, he gives such a testimony of his Almighty power and love, that so long as the sweet sense of this lasts in the soul, the creature's faith cannot be posed; what doth God in his pardoning mercy, but turn the serpent of the law with all its threatenings, from which the sinner fled, as that which would sting him to death, into the blossoming rod of the gospel, that brings forth the sweet fruit of peace and life? And which is the greater miracle of the two think you, *Moses*'s leprous hand made clean and sound, or a poor sinner's heart, leprous with sin, made clean and pure by washing in the blood of Christ? Certainly this miracle of mercy, where it is strongly believed to be done, will make it easy for that soul to trust God in a sea of temporal sufferings, and chearfully follow him through a whole wilderness of troubles in this life. When *David* hath comfortable apprehensions of God's pardoning mercy, then his faith is up, and can strongly act on God for temporal deliverance, *Psalm* xxxii. We find him under the sweet sense of his peace with God, able to vouch God as reconciled to him; *I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin,* ver. v. And now see to what a height his faith acts on God as to outward troubles, ver. 7. *Thou art my hiding place, thou shalt preserve me from trouble, thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.* He spells this, which is the less, from the other that is incomparably the greater mercy.

Secondly, This peace with God, where it is felt, fills the heart with love to Christ. The Christian's love to Christ takes fire at Christ's love to him. And the hotter Christ's love

love lies on the soul, the stronger reflection doth the creature make of love to him again. *She loved much, to whom much was forgiven,* Luke vii. 47. And the more love, the less fear there will be of suffering. When Christ told his disciples *Lazarus was dead, Thomas* would needs go and die with him for company, *John* xi. 16. So powerful is love, even as strong as death; *For a good man* (saith the Apostle) *some would even dare to die;* that is a merciful, kind man, whose love had endeared him to them. How much more will a gracious soul be ready to sacrifice his life for a good God? *Thy name* (saith the Spouse) *is as ointment poured forth, therefore the Virgins love thee,* Cant. i. 2. Then Christ's name is poured forth, when the love of God through him is shed abroad in the soul. Let this precious box be but broke, and the sweet savour of it diffused in the heart, and it will take away the unsavory scent of the most stinking prison in the world. What makes us so alarmed at the thoughts of death, especially if it comes towards us in a bloody dress, and hath some circumstances of a persecutor's cruelty, to put a further grimness on its unpleasing countenance? Surely this comes from guilt and unacquaintance with Christ, and what he hath done for us; who came partly on this very errand into the world, *To deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage,* Heb. ii. 15. And how hath he done it? but by reconciling us to God, and so reconciling us to the thoughts of death itself, as that which can only do us this kind office, to bring us and Christ (that hath done all this for us) together.

Thirdly, This peace enjoyed in the Christian's bosom hath a sweet influence into his self-denial. A grace so necessary to suffering, that Christ lays the cross (as I may so say) upon the back of this grace, *Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me,* Mark viii. 34. Another (with *Simeon of Cyrene)* may be compelled to carry Christ's cross after him a little way; but it is the self-denying soul that will stoop willingly, and down on his knees to have his burden laid on him at Christ's hand. Now the sense of a soul's peace with God will enable the creature in a two-fold self-denial, and by both sweetly dispose him for any suffering from or for Christ.

First, It will enable him to deny himself in his sinful self. Sin may well be called our self; it cleaves so close to us,

even as our members to our body; as hard to mortify a lust, as to cut off a joint. And some sins are more our self than others, as our life is more bound up in some members than others; well, let them be what they will, there is a good day in which, if Christ asks the head of the proudest lust among them all, he shall have it with less regret than *Herodias* obtained the *Baptist's* at *Herod's* hands. And what is that gaudy day in which the Christian can so freely deny his sin, and deliver it up to justice, but when Christ is feasting him with this hidden *Manna* of pardon and peace? A true friend will rather deny himself, than one he loves dearly, if it be in his power to grant his request; but least of all can he deny him, when his friend is doing him a greater kindness at the same time, that he ask a less. No such picklock to open the heart as love. When love comes a begging, and that at a time when it is shewing itself in some eminent expression of kindness to him, at whose door she knocks, there is little fear but to speed. *Esther* chose that time to engage *Ahashuerus*'s heart against *Haman* her enemy, when she exprest her love most to *Ahashuerus*, viz. at a banquet; when doth God give, or indeed when can he give the like demonstration of his love to a poor soul, as when he entertains it at this gospel banquet? Now sure, if ever, God may prevail with his child to send the cursed *Amalekite* to the gallows, his lust to the gibbet; do you think that *Mary Magdalen*, when that blessed news dropt from Christ into her mournful heart, that *her sins, which were many, were all forgiven her,* could now have been persuaded to have opened the door to any of her former lovers, and gone out of these embraces of Christ's love, to have played the whore again? No, I doubt not but she would sooner have chosen the flames of martyrdom than of lust. Indeed, that which can make the creature deny a lust, can make the creature it shall not deny a cross.

Secondly, The sense of this peace will enable the Christian to deny his carnal enjoyments. And these the Christian finds great pull-backs from suffering. As the heart burns in the hot fit of love to the pleasures and profits of this world when he abounds with them; in that degree will his shaking fit of fear and grief be, when Christ calls him to part with them. What the sweet wines and dainty fare of *Capua* was to *Hannibal*'s soldiers, that we shall find any intem-

intemperance of heart to the creature will be to us; it will enervate our spirits, and so effeminate us, that we shall have little mind to endure hardship, when drawn into the field to look an enemy in the face. Now the sense of this gospel-peace will deaden the heart to the creature, and facilitate the work of self-denial. *God forbid* (saith *Paul*) *that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world,* Gal. vi. 14. *Paul*'s heart is dead to the world, now mark what gave the death's wound to his carnal affections. *By whom* (saith he) *the world is crucified to me, and I unto it,* that is, Christ and his cross. There was a time, indeed, that *Paul* loved the world as well as most; but since he hath been acquainted with Christ, and the mercy of God in him to his soul, pardoning his sins, and receiving him into favour and fellowship with himself, he is quite of another mind; he leaves the world, as *Saul* his seeking of the asses, at the news of a kingdom; his haunt lies another way now. For as much as his heavenly Lord and King is come in peace to his soul. None can part with the comfort of the creature so chearfully as he, who hath his mouth at the fountain-head, the love of God himself. Parents are near, and friends are dear, yet a loving wife can forget her father's house, and leave her old friends' company, to go with her husband, though it be to a prison; how much more will a gracious soul bid adieu to these, yea, life itself, to go to Christ, especially when he hath sent the Comforter into his bosom, to cheer him with his sweet company.

A fourth suffering grace, which the sweet sense this gospel-peace doth promote, is *Patience;* affliction and suffering to a patient soul are not grievous. Patience is, as one calls it, the concoctive faculty of the soul. That grace, which digests all things, and turns them into good nourishment. Meat of hard digestion will not do well with squeamish weak stomachs, and therefore they are dainty and nice in their diet; whereas men of strong stomachs, they refuse no meat that is set before them, all fare is alike to them. Truly thus, there are some things of a very hard digestion to the spirits of men; the peevish passionate professor will never concoct reproaches, prison and death itself, but rather quarrel with his profession, if such fare as these attend the gospel. *When tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the*

the word, by and by he is offended, Matt. xiii. 21. This will not stay in his stomach, but makes him cast up even that which else he could have kept (a profession of Christ) might he have had it with a quiet life and a whole skin. But now the patient soul, he makes his meal of what God in his providence sets before him, if peace and prosperity be served up with the gospel, he is thankful, and enjoys the sweetness of the mercy while it lasts; if God takes these away, and instead of them will have him eat the gospel-feast with sour herbs of affliction and persecution, it shall not make him sick of his chear. It is but eating the more largely of the comforts of the gospel with them, and they go down very well wrapt up in them. Indeed the Christian is beholden to those consolations which flow from the peace of the gospel for his patience. It were impossible for the people of God to endure, what sometimes they meet with from men and devils, as they do, had they not sweet help from the sense of God's love in Christ, that lies glowing at their hearts in inward peace and joy. The *Apostle* resolves all the Saints patience, experience and hope, yea, gloriing in their tribulations, into this, as the cause of all, *Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us*, Rom. v. 5. sin makes suffering intolerable: when that is gone, the worst part of the trouble is removed; guilt loads the soul, and bemires it in any suffering; take that away, and let God speak peace to his soul, and he that raged before like a mad-man under the cross, shall carry it without wincing and wining.—*The peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds*, Phil. iii. Now what is patience but the keeping of the heart and mind composed and serene in all troubles that befal us?

SECT. III.

Use 1. This informs our judgments in two particulars. First, what to judge of their patience in afflictions, that have no interest in the gospel-peace. Secondly, What to think of their peace, who in affliction have no patience at all.

First,

First, Some you shall see very still and quiet in affliction, yet mere strangers to this peace, ignorant of Christ the peace-maker, walking in opposition to the terms God offers peace in the gospel upon, and yet very calm in affliction. Certainly all is not right with this poor-creature; if he had any sense how it is with him, he would have little patience, to see himself under the hand of God, and not know, but it may leave him in hell before it hath done with him.—When I see one run over stones and hard ways, barefoot, and not complain, I do not admire his patience, but pity the poor creature that hath benumbed his feet, and as it were, soled them with a brawny dead kind of flesh, so as to lose his feeling: but save your pity much more for those, whose consciences are so benumbed, and hearts petrefied into a senseless stupidity, that they feel their misery no more than the stone doth the mason's saw which cuts it asunder. What good does physic put into a dead man's mouth? If he cannot be chafed to some sense of his condition, all applications are in vain. And if afflictions, which are the strongest physic, leave the creature senseless, there is little hope that any other will work upon him.

Secondly, What shall we think of those that are great pretenders to this peace, yet cannot think with any patience of suffering from God or for God? Certainly so far as the creature is acquainted with this peace, and hath the true sense of God's love in Christ lying warm at his heart, he cannot but find proportionably his heart stand ready to submit to any suffering that God lays out for him. And therefore it behoves us well to try our peace and comfort. If thou hast no heart to suffer for God; but choosest a sin to escape a cross, thy peace is false; if thou hast but little patience under ordinary afflictions, to compose thy spirit from murmuring, and sustain thy heart from sinking, thy faith on the promise is weak. *If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small*, Prov. xxiv. 10.

Use 2. Let this stir thee up, Christian, to be very tender of thy peace with God and thy own conscience. Keep this peace clear and unbroken, and it will keep thy heart whole, when the whole world breaks about thee. So long as this peace of God rules in your hearts, you are safe from fear or danger, though in a prison, or at a stake. But if that be wounded, then thy enemies will come upon thee as

Simeon,

Simeon and *Levi* on the men of *Shechem*, and be too hard for thee. O it is sad, (friends) you will find it so, to go with sore and smarting consciences into a suffering condition. A thorn in the foot will make any way uneasy to the traveller, and guilt in the conscience any condition uncomfortable to the Christian, but most of all a suffering one. Now, if you will keep your peace unbroken, you must bestow some attendance on it, and set as it were a life-guard about it. The choicest flowers need most looking to. The richer the treasure, the safer we lay it. This peace is thy treasure, look well where thou layest it. Two ways our Saviour tells us, that worldly treasure, such as silver and gold, may be lost; by *thieves that break in and carry it away, and by rust that eat and corrupt it*, Matt. vi. 19. There are two ways wherein the Christian may go by the loss in this his heavenly treasure of inward peace and comfort; presumptuous sins, these are the thieves that break through and steal the Saints comfort away; when the Christian comes to look into his soul after such a bold act, and thinks to entertain himself (as formerly) with the comforts of his pardoned state, interest in Christ, and hopes of heaven through him, alas, he finds a sad change, no promise that will give out its consolations to him. The cellar door is locked, Christ with-drawn, and the keys carried away with him. He may even cry out with a sad complaint, as *Mary* when she found not Christ's body in the sepulchre, *They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.* Thus the Christian may with an aching heart bemoan his folly; my pride, my uncleanness, my earthly mindedness, they have taken away my treasure, robbed me of my comfort, I could never have a comfortable sight of God's face in any duty or promise since I fell into that foul sin. And therefore, Christian, have a care of such robbers of thy peace as this. *The spirit of man is called the candle of the Lord*, Prov. xx. 27. Hath God lighted thy candle (Christian) cheered thy spirit, (I mean) with the sense of his love? Take heed of presumptuous sins; if such a thief be suffered in this thy candle, thy comfort will soon swail out. Hast thou fallen into the hands of any such presumptuous sins; that have stolen thy peace from thee; send speedily thy hue-and-cry after them, I mean, make thy sad moan to God, and raise heaven upon them by a spirit of prayer.

This

This is no time to delay; the further thou lettest these sins go without repentance, the harder thou wilt find it to recover thy lost peace and joy; and for thy encouragement know, God is ready upon thy serious and solemn return, to restore thee the joy of his salvation, and do justice upon these enemies of thy soul by his mortifying grace, if thou wilt prosecute the law upon them closely and vigorously, without relenting towards them, or being bribed with the pleasure, or carnal advantage, that they will not spare to offer, so their lives may be spared.

Again, As presumptuous sins are the thieves that with a high hand rob the Christian of his comfort; so sloth and negligence are as the rust, that in time will fret into his comfort, and eat out the heart and strength of it. It is impossible that the Christian who is careless and secure in his walking, unfrequent or negligent in his communion with God, should long be owner of much peace or comfort, that is true? What if thou dost not pour water of presumptuous sins into the lamp of thy joy to quench it, it is enough if thou dost not pour oil of duty to feed and maintain it. Thou art murderer to thy comfort by starving it, as well as by stabbing of it.

VERSE XVI.

Above all, taking the shield of Faith, whereby ye shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked.

THE fourth piece in the Christian *Panoply*, presents itself in this verse to our consideration; and that is, *The shield of faith*. A grace of graces it is, and here fitly placed in the midst of the other, her companions. It stands (me thinks) among them as the heart in the midst of the body; or, if you please, as *David*, when *Samuel anointed him in the midst of his brethren*, 1 Sam. xvi. 13. *The Apostle*, when he comes to

speak of this grace, he doth, as it were, lift up its head, and anoint it above all its fellows. *Above all, take the shield of faith,* and the words easily fall into these two general parts.

First, An exhortation, *Above all, take the shield of faith.*

Secondly, A powerful argument pressing the Exhortation, *Whereby ye shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked.*

CHAP. XV.

The Explication of the Words in a four-fold Enquiry.

IN the exhortation, these four particulars call for our enquiry towards the explication of the words.

First, What faith it is, that here is commended to the Christian soldier.

Secondly, Having found the kind, we are to enquire what this faith is as to its nature.

Thirdly, Why it is compared to a shield, rather than other pieces.

Fourthly, What is the importance of this above all.

SECT. I.

What faith it is that here is commended: This will soon be known, if we consider the cause and end for which it is commended to the Christian; and that is to enable him *to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one,* the Devil. Now look upon the several kinds of faith; and that among them must be the faith of this place, which enables the creature to quench all Satan's fiery darts. Historical faith cannot do this, and therefore is not it: This is so far from quenching Satan's fiery darts, that the Devil himself that shoots them, hath this faith, James ii. 19. *The Devils believed; Tempo-*

rary

rary faith cannot do it; this is so far from quenching Satan's fiery darts, that itself is quenched by them. It makes a goodly blaze of profession, and *endures for awhile*, Mat. xiii. 21. but soon disappears: *Miraculous faith*, this falls as short as the former. *Judas*'s miraculous faith, which he had with other of the Apostles (for ought that we can read) enabling him to cast Devils out of others, left himself possessed of the Devil of covetousness, hypocrisy, and treason; yea, a whole legion of lusts, that hurried him down the hill of despair into the bottomless pit of perdition. There is only one kind of faith remains; which is it the Apostle means in this place? and that is *justifying faith*. This indeed is a grace that makes, whoever hath it, the Devils match. Satan hath not so much advantage of the Christian by the transcendency of his natural abilities, as he hath of Satan in this cause, and this his weapon. The Apostle is confident to give the day to the Christian before the fight is fully over; *ye have overcome the wicked one*, 1 John ii. 13; that is, you are as sure to do it, as if you were now mounting your triumphant chariot in Heaven. The Saint shall overcome Satan; and the same Apostle tells us what gets him the day, 1 John v. 4. *This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.*

SECT. II.

The second enquiry is, what this justifying faith is?

First, Negatively, in two particulars.

First, Justifying faith is not a naked assent to the truths of the Gospel. This, justifying faith doth give; but this doth not make it justifying faith. A dogmatical faith, or historical, is comprehended in justifying faith; but dogmatical faith doth not infer justifying faith. Justifying faith cannot be without a dogmatical: It implies it, as the rational soul in man doth the sensitive. But the dogmatical may be without the justifying, as the sensitive soul in the beast is without the rational. *Judas* knew the Scriptures, and, without doubt, did assent to the truth of them, when he was so zealous a preacher of the gospel; but he never had so much as one dram of justifying faith in his soul, John vi. 64. *There are some of you which believe not; for Jesus knew*

from the beginning, who they were that believed not, and who should betray him; yea, *Judas*'s master, the Devil himself, one far enough (I suppose) from justifying faith, yet he assents to the truth of the Word. He goes against his conscience when he denies them: When he tempted Christ, he did not dispute against the Scripture, but from the Scripture, drawing his arrows out of this quiver, *Mat.* iv. 6. And at another time, he makes as full a confession of Christ (for the matter) as *Peter* himself did, *Mat.* viii. 29. compared with *Mat.* xvi. 17. Assent to the truth of the Word, is but an act of the understanding, which reprobates and Devils may exercise. But justifying faith is a compound habit and hath its seat, both in the understanding and will; and, therefore, called a *believing with the heart,* Rom. x. 10; yea, *a believing with all the heart,* Acts viii. 37. *Philip said, if thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest.* It takes in all the powers of the soul. There is a double object in the promise; one proper to the understanding, to move that; another proper to the will, to excite and work upon that. As the promise is true, so it calls for an act of assent from the understanding, and as it is good as well as true, so it calls for an act of the will to embrace and receive it; therefore, he which only notionally knows the promise, and speculatively assents to the truth of it, without clinging to it, and embracing of it, he doth not believe savingly, and can have no more benefit from the promise, than the nourishment from the food he sees, and acknowledgeth to be wholesome, but eats none of it.

Secondly, Faith is not assurance. If it were, *Saint John* might have spared his pains, who *wrote to them that believed on the Name of the Son of God, that they might know that they had eternal life,* 1 John v. 13. They might then have said, we do this already; what else is our faith, but a believing that we are such as through Christ are pardoned, and shall through him be saved? But this cannot be so: If faith were assurance; then a man's sin would be pardoned before he believes, for he must necessarily be pardoned, before he can know he is pardoned. The candle must be lighted before I can see it is: The child must be born before I can be assured it is born: The object must be before the act. Assurance is rather the fruit of faith, than faith itself. It is in faith as the flower is in the root; faith in time, after much communion

communion with God, acquaintance with the Word, and experience of his dealings with the soul, may flourish into assurance: But, as the root truly lives before the flower appears, and continues when that hath shed its beautiful leaves, and is gone again, so doth true justifying faith live before assurance comes, and when it disappears. Assurance is, as it were, the cream of faith; now you know, there is milk before there is cream; this riseth not but after some time standing, and there remains milk after it is fleted off. How many of the precious Saints of God must we shut out from being believers, if no faith, but what amounts to assurance? We must needs offend against the generation of God's children, among whom some are babes not yet come to the use of their reflect acts of faith, so as to own the grace of God in them to be true, upon the review that they take of their own actings; and must not the child be allowed to be a child, till he can speak for himself, and say, he is so? Others there are in Christ's family who are of higher stature, and greater experience in the ways of God, yet have lost those apprehensions of pardoning mercy, which once they were (through the goodness of God) possessed of; shall we say their faith went away with their assurance? how oft then in a year may a believer be no believer? even as oft as God withdraws, and leaves the creature in the dark. Assurance is like the sun-flower, which opens with the day, and shuts with the night. It follows the motion of God's face; if that looks smilingly on the soul, it lives, if that frowns or hides itself, it dies. But faith is a plant that can grow in the shade, a grace that can find the way to heaven in a dark night. It can *walk in darkness, and yet trust in the Name of the Lord*, Isaiah l. 10. In a word, by making the essence of faith to lie in assurance, we should not only offend against the generation of God's children, but against the God and Father of these children, for at one clap we turn the greater number of those children he hath here on earth out of doors; yea, we are cruel to those that he is most tender of, and make sad the hearts of those that he would have chiefly comforted. Indeed, if this were true, a great part of Gospel-provision laid up in the promises is of little use; we read of promises to those that mourn, *they shall be comforted;* to the contrite, *they shall be revived*; to him that walks in darkness, *Isaiah* l. and the like; these belong to believers, and none else; surely then

then there are some believers that are in the dark, under the hatches of sorrow, wounded and broken with their sins, and temptation for them; but they are not such as are assured of the love of God, their water is turned into joy, their night into light, their sighs and sobs into joy and praise.

Secondly, I shall answer affirmatively what justifying faith is; and in the description of it I shall consider it solely as justifying. And so take it in these few words, It is that act of the soul, whereby it rests on Christ crucified for pardon and life, and that upon the warrant of the promise. Observe,

First, The subject where faith is seated, not any single faculty, but the soul.

Secondly, Here is the object of faith as justifying, and that is Christ crucified. The whole truth of God is the object of justifying faith, it trades with the whole word of God, and doth firmly assent unto it; but in its justifying act, it singles out Christ crucified for its object. First, The person of Christ is the object of faith as justifying. Secondly, Christ as crucified.

First, The person of Christ, not any axiom or proposition in the Word: This is the object of assurance, not of faith. Assurance saith, I believe my sins are pardoned through Christ: Faith's language is, I believe on Christ for the pardon of them. The Word of God doth direct our faith to Christ, and terminates it upon him; called therefore *a coming to Christ,* Mat. xi. 28. *a receiving of him,* John i. 12. *a believing on him,* John xvii. 20. The promise is but the dish, in which Christ the true food of the soul is served up; and if Faith's hand be on the promise, it is but as one that draws the dish to him, that he may come at the dainties in it. The promise is the marriage-ring on the hand of faith; now we are not married to the ring, but with it unto Christ. *All promises* (saith the Apostle) *are Yea and Amen in him.* They have their excellency from him, and efficacy in him. I mean, in a soul's union to him. To run away with a promise, and not to close with Christ, and by faith become one in him, is, as if a man should rend a branch from a tree, and lay it up in his chest, expecting it to bear fruit. Promises are dead branches severed from Christ: But when a soul by faith becomes united to Christ, then he partakes of all his fatness; not a promise but yields sweetness to it.

Secondly, As Christ is the primary object of faith, so Christ

Christ as crucified. Not Christ in his personal excellencies; so he is the object rather of our love than faith: But as bleeding, and that to death under the hand of divine justice for to make an atonement by God's appointment for the sins of the world. As the handmaid's eye is to her mistress's hand for direction, so faith's eye is on God revealing himself in his word; which way God by it points the soul, thither it goes. Now there faith finds God intending to save poor sinners pitched on Christ, and Christ alone for the transacting and effecting of it; and him whom God chuseth to trust with the work, him and him alone will faith chuse to lay the burthen of her confidence on.

Again, Faith observes how Christ performed this great work, and, accordingly, how the promise holds him forth for pardon and salvation. Now faith finds, that Christ made the full payment to the justice of God for sin, when he poured out his blood to death upon the cross; all the preceding acts of his humiliation were but preparatory to this. He was born to die; he was sent into the world, as a lamb bound with the bonds of an irreversible decree, for a sacrifice. Christ himself when he came into the world understood this to be his errand, Heb. x. 5. *When he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and burnt offering thou wouldst not, but a body thou hast prepared me*, i. e. *to be an expiatory sacrifice;* without this, all he had done would have been labour lost. No redemption but by his blood, Ephes i. 7. *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our sins.* No Church without his blood, Acts xx. 28. *The Church of God, which he hath purchased with his blood.* The Church is taken out of dying Jesus's side, as *Eve* out of sleeping *Adam*'s. Christ did not redeem and save poor souls, by sitting in Majesty on his heavenly throne, but by hanging on the shameful cross, under the tormenting hand of man's fury, and God's just wrath. And, therefore, the poor soul that would have pardon, is directed to place his faith, not only on Christ, but on bleeding Christ, Rom. iii. 25. *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.*

Thirdly, The act of faith upon this object, and that is resting on Christ crucified for pardon and life. I know there are many acts of the soul antecedent to this, without which the creature can never truly exercise this. As knowledge, especially of God and Christ, upon whose authority and testimony it relies, *I know whom I have believed*, 2 Tim. i. 12.

none

none will readily trust a stranger, that he is wholly unacquainted with. *Abraham* went, indeed, he knew not whither, but he did not go with he knew not who. The great thing that God laboured to instruct *Abraham* in, and satisfy him with, was the knowledge of his own glorious self, who he was, that he might take his word and rely on it, how harsh and improbable, yea, impossible soever it might sound in sense or reason's ear, *I am the Almighty God, walk before me, and be thou perfect.* Secondly, assent to the truth of the word of God: If this foundation-stone be not laid, faith's building cannot go on. Who will trust him, that he dares not think speaks true? Thirdly, a sense of our own vileness and emptiness. By the one to see our demerit, that we deserve, hell and damnation; by the other, our own impotency, how little we can contribute, yea, just nothing to our own reconciliation. I join them together, because the one ariseth out of the other; sense of this emptiness comes from the deep apprehensions a soul hath of the other's fulness; you never knew a man full of self-confidence, and self-abasement together. The conscience cannot abound with the sense of sin, and the heart with self-conceit at the same time. *When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died,* Rom. vii. 9. that is, when the commandment came in the accusations of it to his conscience. Sin, like a sleepy lion, had laid still, and he secure and confident by it; when that began to roar in his conscience, then he died; that is, his vain confidence of himself gave up the ghost. Both these are necessary to faith; sense of sin, like the smart of a wound, to make the creature think of a plaister to cure it; and sense of emptiness and insufficiency in himself or any creature to do the cure, necessary to make him go out to Christ for cure. We do not go abroad to beg what we have of our own within doors. These (with some other) are necessary to faith; but the receiving of Christ, and resting on Christ, is that act of faith to which justification is promised, John iii. 18. *He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the Name of the only begotten Son of God.* Now every one that assents to the truth of what the scripture saith of Christ, doth not believe on Christ. No; this believing on Christ implies an union of the soul to Christ, and fiduciary recumbency on Christ, therefore we are bid to take hold of Christ, *Isaiah* xxvii. 5. (who is there called God's strength, as elsewhere his

his arm) *that we may make peace with God, and we shall make peace with him;* it is not the sight of a man's arm stretched out to a man in the water will save him from drowning, but the taking hold of it. Christ is a stone, faith builds upon Christ for salvation, and how, but by laying its whole weight and expectation of mercy on him? what *Paul*, 2 *Tim.* i. 12. calls *believing* in the former part of the verse, he calls in the latter part *a committing to him to be kept against that day.*

The last branch in the description, is the warrant and security that faith goes upon in this act. And this it takes from the promise; indeed there is no way how God can be conceived to contract a debt to his creature, but by promise. There are ways for men to become debtors one to another, though never any promise past from them. The father is a debtor to his child, and owes him love, provision, and nurture: The child a debtor to his parent, and owes him honour and obedience, though neither of them promised this to each other: Much more doth the creature stand deep in God's debt-book, and owes himself with all he hath to God his Maker, though he hath not the grace voluntarily to make these over to God by promise and covenant. But the great God is so absolute a Sovereign, that none can make a law to bind him but himself; till he be pleased to pass an act of grace, of his own good will, to give this, or do that good thing, to and for his poor creatures, no claim can be laid to the least mercy at his hands. There are two things therefore that are greatly to be heeded by the soul.

First, He must enquire for a promise to bear his faith out, and warrant him to expect such a mercy at God's hand. And then secondly, when he hath found a promise, and observed the terms on which it runs, not to stay for any further encouragement, but upon the credit of the naked promise to set his faith on work.

First, To enquire out a promise, and observe well the terms on which it runs, indeed upon the point it comes all to one, to believe without a promise, or to believe on a promise, but not observe the terms of it; both are presumptuous, and speed alike: A Prince hath as much reason to be angry with him that doth not keep close to his commission, as with another that acts without any commission. O how little considered is this by many? who take hold

of God's arm to lean on for pardon and salvation, but never think, that the promise which presents Christ to be leaned on as a Saviour, presents him at the same time to be chosen as a Lord and Prince; such were the rebellious *Israelites*, who make God and his promise a leaning stock for their foul elbows to rest on; *They call themselves of the holy City, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel,* Isa. xlviii. 2. but they were more bold than welcome. God rejected their confidence, and lothed their sauciness. Though a Prince would not distain to let a poor wounded man (faint with bleeding, and unable to go alone) upon his humble request, make use of his arm, rather than he should perish in the streets; yet he would with indignation reject the same motion from a filthy drunkard that is besmeared with his vomit, if he should desire leave to lean on him, because he cannot go alone. I am sure, how welcome soever the poor humble soul (that lies bleeding for his sins at the very mouth of hell in his own thoughts) is to God, when he comes upon the encouragement of the promise to lean on Christ, yet the profane wretch that emboldens himself to come to Christ, shall be kicked away with infinite disdain and abhorrence by a holy God, for abusing his promise.

Secondly, When a poor sinner hath found a promise, and observes the terms with a heart willing to embrace them, now he is to put forth an act of faith upon the credit of the naked promise, without staying for any other encouragement elsewhere. Faith is a right pilgrim-grace; it travels with us to Heaven, and when it sees us safe got within our Father's doors, it takes leave of us. Now the promise is the Pilgrim's staff, with which it sets forth, though (like *Jacob* on his way to *Padan-Aram*) it hath nothing else with it. *Remember thy word unto thy servant* (saith *David*) *upon which thou hast caused me to hope,* Psal. cxix, 49. The word of promise was all he had to shew; and he counts that enough to set his faith on work. But alas! some make comfort the ground of faith, and experience their warrant to believe. They will believe when God manifests himself to them, and sends in some sensible demonstration of his love to their souls; but till this be done, the promise hath little authority to silence their unbelieving cavils, and quiet their misgiving hearts into a waiting on God for the performance of what there is spoke from God. Like old *Jacob,* who gave

gave no credit to his children, when they told him *Joseph* was yet alive, and Governor over all the land of *Egypt*. This news was too good and great to enter into his belief, who had given him up for dead so long; it is said, *his heart fainted, for he believed them not*, Gen. xlv. 6. But when he saw the waggons that *Joseph* had sent to carry him thither, then it is said, *the spirit of Jacob revived*, ver. 27. Truly thus, though the promise tells the poor humbled sinner, Christ is alive, Governor of Heaven itself, with all power there and on earth put into his hand, that he may give eternal life unto all that believe on him; and he be therefore exhorted to rest upon Christ in the promise, yet his heart faints and he believes not; it is the waggons he would fain see, some sensible expressions of God's love that he listens after, if he did but know that he was an elect person, or were one that God did love, then he would believe. But God hath little reason to thank him in the mean time for suspending his faith till these come. This is to believe, for spiritual loves, and is rather sense than faith.

SECT. III.

Why is faith compared to a shield?

Answ. For a double resemblance, that is between this grace, and that piece of armour.

First, The shield is not for the defence of any particular part of the body, as almost all the other pieces are: helmet fitted for the head, plate designed for the breast, and so others, they have their several parts, which they are fastened to. But the shield is a piece that is intended for the defence of the whole body. It used therefore to be made very large, for its broadness called a gate or door, because so long and large, as in a manner to cover the whole body. To which that place alludes, *Psal.* v. 12. *Thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous, with favour thou wilt compass him as with a shield.* And if the shield were not large enough at once to cover every part, yet being a movable piece of armour, the skilful soldier might turn it this way or that way, to catch the blow, or arrow from lighting on any part they were directed to. And this indeed doth excellently set forth

the universal use that faith is of to the Christian. It defends the whole man ; every part of the Christian by it is preserved. Sometimes the temptation is levelled at his head ; Satan he will be disputing against this truth, and that, to make the Christian, if he can, call them into question, merely because his reason and understanding cannot comprehend them, and he prevails with some that do not think themselves the unwisest in the world, upon this very account, to blot the Deity of Christ, with other mysterious truths of the Gospel, quite out of their Creed. Now faith interposeth between the Christian and this arrow. It comes in to the relief of the Christian's weak understanding as seasonably, as *Zeruiah* did to *David*, when the *Giant Ishbi-benob* thought to have slain him. I will trust the Word of God, saith the believer, rather than my own pur-blind reason. *Abraham not being weak in faith, considered not his own body now dead,* Rom. iv. 19. if sense should have had the hearing of that business, yea, if that holy man had put it to a reference between sense and reason also, what resolution his thoughts should come to concerning this strange message that was brought him, he would have been in danger of calling the truth of it in question, though God himself was the messenger : but faith brought him honourably off.

Again, Is it conscience that the tempter assaults? (And it is not seldom that he is shooting his fiery darts of horror and terror at this mark) faith receives the shock, and saves the creature harmless. *I had fainted unless I had believed* (saith *David*) *Psalm* xxvii. 13. He means when false witnesses rose up against him, and such as breathed out cruelty, as appears, *ver.* 12, faith was his best fence against man's charge, and so it is against Satan's and conscience's also. Never was man in a sadder condition than the poor jailor, *Acts* xvi. much ado he had to keep his own hands from offering violence to himself ; who that had seen him fall trembling at *Paul* and *Silas's* feet, with that sad question in his mouth, *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?* ver. 30. could have thought this deep wound that was now given his conscience, would so soon have been closed and cured ? as we find it, ver. 34. The earth-quake of horror that so dreadfully shook his conscience is gone, and his trembling turned into rejoicing ; now mark what made this blessed calm. *Believe,* (saith *Paul*) *on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be*

be saved, ver. 31. And *ver.* 34. it is said, he *rejoiced, believing in God with his whole house.* It is faith stills the storm which sin raised, faith that changed his doleful note into joy and gladness. Happy man that had such skilful surgeons so near him, who could direct him the nearest way to a cure.

Again, Is it the Will that the temptation is laid to catch? some commands of God cannot be obeyed without much self-denial, because they cross us in that, our own wills are carried forth strongly to desire, so that we must deny our will before we can do the Will of God. Now a temptation comes very forcibly, when it runs with the tide of our own wills. What, saith Satan, wilt thou serve a God that thus thwarts thee in every thing? If thou lovest any thing more than other, presently he must have that from thee: no lamb in all the flock will serve for a sacrifice, but *Isaac—Abraham's* only child must be offered up. No place will content God, that *Abraham* should serve him in, but where he must live in banishment from his dear relations and acquaintance; wilt thou saith Satan, yield to such hard terms as these? now faith is the grace that doth the soul admirable service at such a pinch as this: it is able to appease the tumult, which such a temptation may raise, and to keep the King of heaven's peace so sweetly in the Christian's bosom, that such a temptation, if it comes, shall find few or none to declare for it. *Heb.* xi. 8. *by faith* (it is said) *Abraham obeyed, and went out, not knowing whither.* And we do not read of one fond look that his heart cast back upon his dear native country, as he went from it, so well-pleased had faith made him with his journey. It was hard work for *Moses* to strip himself of the Magistrate's robes, and put his hands on his servant's head; hard to leave another to enter upon his labours, and reap the honour of lodging the *Israelite's* colours in *Canaan*, after it had cost him so many a weary step to bring them within sight of it, yet faith made him willing. He saw better robes that he should put on in Heaven, than those he was called to put off on Earth. The lowest place in glory is beyond all compare greater preferment than the highest place of honour here below; to stand before the Throne there, and minister to God in immediate service, than to sit in a Throne on Earth, and have all the world waiting at his foot.

Secondly,

Secondly, The Shield doth not only defend the whole body, but is a defence to the Soldier's Armour also, it keeps the arrow from the helmet as well as the head; from the breast and breast-plate also. Thus faith is Armour upon Armour, a grace that preserves all the other graces.

SECT. IV.

Fourthly, What doth this (above all) import?

Answ. There is variety among Interpreters about it. *Jerome* reads it, *in omnibus, sumentes scutum fidei.* In all things taking the shield of faith, *i. e.* in all duties, enterprizes, temptations, or afflictions, whatever you are called to do or suffer, take faith; indeed faith to the Christian, is like fire to the Chymist, nothing can be done without it Christianly. *Without faith it is impossible to please God,* Heb. xi. 6. And how can the Christian please himself in that wherein he doth not please his God? others read it, *over all take the shield of faith,* i. e. take it over all your graces, as that which will cover them. All other graces have their safety from faith, they lie secure under the shadow of faith, as an Army lies safe under the protection and command of a strong Castle planted round with cannon: But we shall follow our translation, as being most comprehensive. *Above all take, &c.* that is, among all the pieces of Armour which you are to provide, and wear for your defence, let this have the pre-eminence, and having got, to keep it. Now that the Apostle meant to give a pre-eminence to faith above other graces, appears, *First,* by the piece of Armour he compares it to; *the shield,* which of old was prized above all other pieces by soldiers; they counted it greater shame to lose their shield than to lose the field, and therefore when under the very foot of their enemy, they would not part with it, but esteemed it an honour to die with their shield in their hand. It was the charge one laid upon her son, going into the wars, when she gave him a shield, *that he should either bring his shield home with him, or he be brought home upon his shield;* she had rather see him dead with it, than come home alive without it. Secondly, by the noble effect which is here ascribed to faith, *By which ye shall quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.*

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The other pieces are nakedly commended ; take the girdle of truth, breast-plate of righteousness, and so the rest, but nothing singly ascribed to any of them, what they can do; but when he speaks of faith, he ascribes the whole victory to it ; this quencheth all the fiery darts of the wicked ; and why ? are the other graces of no use, and doth faith do all ? what need then the Christian load himself with more than this one piece ? I answer, every piece hath its necessary use in the Christian's warfare ; not any one part of the whole suit can be spared in the day of battle, but the reason (I humbly conceive) why no particular effect is annexed severally to each of these, but all ascribed to faith, is to let us know, that all these graces, their efficacy, and our benefit from them, is in their conjunction with faith, and influence they receive from faith ; so that this is plainly the design of the Spirit of God to give faith the precedency in our care above the rest ; only take heed that you do not fancy any indifferency, or negligence to be allowed you in your endeavours after the other graces, because you are more strongly provoked and excited up to this. The Apostle would intend your care here, but not remit it there; cannot we bid a soldier above all parts of his body to beware of a wound at his heart, but he must needs think presently he need take no care to guard his head ; truly such a one would deserve a cracked crown to cure him of his folly. The words thus opened, we shall content ourselves with one general observation from them.

CHAP. II.

Sheweth the pre-eminence of faith above other graces, in four particulars.

THAT faith, of all graces, is the chief, and chiefly to be laboured for : There is a precedency or pre-eminence peculiar to this above all other : It is among graces, as the

Sun

Sun is among the *Planets ;* or as *Solomon's virtuous woman among the daughters*, Prov. xxxi. 29. though every *grace* hath done *virtuously*, yet thou *O faith excellest them all.* The *Apostle* indeed gives the precedency to love, and sets faith on the lower hand, 1 *Cor.* xiii. 13. *Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three, but the greatest is charity ;* yet you may observe, that this prelation of it before faith, hath a particular respect to the Saint's blissful state in Heaven ; where love remains, and faith ceaseth ; in which regard, love indeed is the greater, because it is the end of our faith ; we apprehend by faith, that we may enjoy by love : But if we consider the Christian's present state, militant on Earth, in this respect love must give place to faith, it is true, love is the grace that shall triumph in Heaven ; but it is faith, which is the conquering grace on earth. *This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith,* 1 John v. 4. love indeed hath its place in the battle, and doth excellent service, but it is under faith its leader, *Gal.* v. 6. *faith which worketh by love* ; even as the Captain fighteth by his soldiers, whom he leads on ; so faith works by love, which it excites. Love (it is true) is the grace that at last possesseth the inheritance, but it is faith that gives the Christian right unto it, without which he should never enjoy it, *John* i. 12. *To as many as received him, he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his Name.* In a word, it is love that unites God and glorified Saints together in Heaven ; but it was faith that first united them to Christ, while they were on Earth, *Eph.* 3. 17. *that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.* And if Christ had not dwelt in them by faith on Earth, they should never have dwelt with God in Heaven : But I proceed to shew wherein faith hath such a prelation above other graces.

SECT. I.

First, In the great enquiry God makes after faith above all other graces. Nothing more speaks our esteem of persons or things, than our enquiry after them. We ask first and most for those that stand highest in our thoughts. *Is your*

your father well (said *Joseph*) *the old man of whom ye spake, is he alive?* Gen. xliii. 27. No doubt there were others whose welfare *Joseph* would have been glad to hear of also, but being most pent and pained with a natural affection for his father, he eased himself of this first. And when *David* asked for *Absalom* above all others: *Is the young man Absalom safe?* and over with it again to *Cush*, 2 Sam. xviii. it was to guess how highly he valued his life. Now you shall find the great enquiry that God makes is for faith. *When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the Earth?* Luke xviii. 8. Implying, that this is the grace which he will especially look for, and desires to find. We read, *John* ix. of a great miracle, a man by Christ restored to his sight, that was born blind: This so enraged the malicious *Pharisees*, that they excommunicate the poor man for no other fault, but giving his merciful Physician a good word: This brings Christ the sooner to him, so tender is he of those that suffer for him, that they shall not long want his sweet company; and he hath no cause to complain for being cast out of man's society, that gains Christ's presence by it. Now observe what Christ saith to him at his first meeting, *ver.* 35. *Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and when he had found him, he said unto him, dost thou believe on the Son of God?* The man had already expressed some zeal for Christ, in vindicating him, and speaking well of him to the head of the bitterest enemies he had on Earth, for which he was now a sufferer at their hands. This was very commendable, but there is one thing that Christ prizeth above all this, and that is faith. This he enquires after, *dost thou believe on the Son of God?* As if he had said, all this thy zeal in speaking for me, and patience in suffering are nothing worth in my account, except thou hast faith also. Indeed most of God's dealings with his people, what are they but enquiries after faith, either the truth or strength of it? When he afflicts them, it *is for the trial of their faith,* 1 Pet. i. 7. Afflictions they are God's spade and mattock, by which he digs into his peoples' hearts to find out this gold of faith; not but that he enquires for other graces also, but this is named for all, as the chief, which found, all the other will soon appear. When God seems to delay and makes (as it were) a halt in his providence, before he comes with the mercy he

promiseth, and we pray for; it is exploratory to faith. *O! woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt,* Mat. xv. 28. She had received her answer without so much ado, only Christ had a mercy in store for her more than she thought of; with the granting of her suit in the cure of her daughter, he had a mind to give her the evidence of her faith also, and the high esteem God hath of this grace, as that which may have of him what it will.

SECT. II.

The commendations that are given to faith above other graces, you shall observe that in the same action, wherein other graces are eminently exercised as well as faith, even then faith is taken notice of, and the crown set upon its head, rather than any of the other. We hear nothing almost of any other grace throughout the whole *eleventh of the Hebrews* but faith; *by faith Abraham, by faith Jacob,* and the rest of those worthies, did all those famous exploits. There was a concurrence of the other graces with faith in them all. But all goes under the name of faith. The whole army fight, yet the general or captain hath the honour of the victory ascribed to him. *Alexander*'s and *Cæsar*'s names are transmitted to posterity as the great conquerors, that overcame in so many battles, not the private soldiers that fought under them. Faith is the captain-grace; all those famous acts of those Saints are recorded as the atchievements of faith. Thus concerning the Centurion, Mat. viii. 10. *Verily* (saith Christ) *I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel.* There were other graces very eminent in the Centurion besides his faith; his conscientious care of his poor servant, for whom he could have done no more if he had been his own child; there are some that call themselves Christians, yet would not have troubled themselves so much for a sick servant; such, alas! are oft less regarded in sickness than their master's beast: But especially his humility, this shined forth very eminently in that self-abasing expression, *Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof,* ver. 8. Consider but his calling and degree therein, and it makes his humility more conspicuous. A swords-

man,

man, yea, a commander, such use to speak big and high. Power is seldom a friend to humility; surely he was a man of a rare humble spirit, that he, whose mouth was used so much to words of command over his soldiers, could so humble himself in his address to Christ; yet his faith out-shines his humility in its greatest strength. Not, I have not found such humility, but such faith in all *Israel*. As if Christ had said, there is not one believer in all *Israel*, but I know him, and how rich he is in faith also; but I have not found so much of this heavenly treasure in any one's hand, as in this Centurion's. Indeed, the Christian's chief riches is in faith's hand. *Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith?* James ii. 5. Why rich in faith, rather than rich in patience, rich in love, or any other grace? O! great reason for it; when the creature comes to lay claim to pardon of sin, the favour of God, and heaven itself, it is not love, patience, &c. but faith alone that lays down the price of all these. Not, Lord pardon, save me, here is my love and patience for it; but here is Christ, and the price of his blood, which faith presents thee for the full purchase of them all; and this leads to a third, and indeed the chief of all.

SECT. III.

Thirdly, The high office that faith is set in above other graces, in the business of our justification before God. *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.* Rom. v. 1. Not justified by love, repentance, patience, or any other grace beside faith. O! how harsh doth it sound in a Christian ear, justifying patience, justifying repentance? And if they were concerned in the act of justification, as faith is, the name would as well become them, as it doth faith itself. But we find this appropriated to faith, and the rest hedged out from having to do in the act of justification, though included and supposed in the person who is justified. It is faith that justifies without works. This is *Paul's* task to prove, *Rom.* iii. But this faith which justifies, is not dead or idle, but a lively working faith, which seems to be *James's* design, *chap.* ii. As God did single Christ out from all others, to be the only Mediator betwixt him and man, and

his righteousness to be the meritorious cause of our justification; so he hath singled faith out from all the other graces, to be the instrument or means for appropriating this righteousness of Christ to ourselves. Therefore, as this righteousness is called *the righteousness of God*, and opposed to our own righteousness (though wrought by God in us) *Rom.* x. 3. because it is wrought by Christ for us, but not inherent in us as the other is. So also it is called *the righteousness of faith*, Rom. iv. 11, 13. not the righteousness of repentance, love, or any other grace. Now, wherefore is it called the righteousness of faith, and not of love, repentance, &c.? Surely, not that faith itself is our righteousness; then we should be justified by works, while we are justified by faith, contrary to the Apostle, who opposeth faith and works, *Rom.* iv.

In a word, then we should be justified by a righteousness of our own, for faith is a grace inherent in us, and as much our own work as any grace besides is. But this is as contrary to the same Apostle's doctrine, *Phil.* iii. 9. where our own righteousness, and the righteousness which is by faith, are declared to be inconsistent. It can, therefore, be called the righteousness of faith, for no other reason, but because faith is the only grace whose office it is to lay hold on Christ, and so to appropriate his righteousness for justification to our souls. Christ and faith are relatives, which must not be severed. Christ, he is the treasure, and faith the hand which receives it. Christ's righteousness is the robe, faith the hand that puts it on; so that it is Christ who is the treasure; by his blood he dischargeth our debt, and not faith; whose office is only to receive Christ, whereby he becomes ours. It is Christ's righteousness that is the robe which covers our nakedness, and makes us beautiful in God's eye, only faith hath the honour to put the robe on the soul; and it is no small honour that is therein put upon faith above other graces. As God graced *Moses* exceedingly above the rest of his brethren (the *Israelites)* when he was called up the Mount to receive the law from God's mouth, while they had their bounds set them, to stand waiting at the bottom of the hill, till he brought it down; so doth God highly honour faith, to call this up as the grace, by whose hand he will convey this glorious privilege of justification over to us.

Quest.

Quest. But why is faith, rather than any grace else, employed in this act?

First, Because there is no grace hath so proper a fitness for this office as faith. Why hath God appointed the eye to see, and not the ear? Why the hand to take our food, rather than the foot? It is easily answered, because these members have a particular fitness for these functions, and not the other. Thus faith hath a fitness for this work peculiar to itself. We are justified not by giving any thing to God what we do, but by receiving from God what Christ hath done for us. Now faith is the only receiving grace, and therefore only fit for this office.

Secondly, There is no grace that God could trust his honour so safely with in this business of justification, as with faith. The great design God hath in justifying a poor sinner, is to magnify his free mercy in the eye of his creature; this is writ in such fair characters in the word, that he which runs may read it. God was resolved that his free mercy should go away with all the honour, and the creature should be quite cut out from any pretensions to partnership with him. Now, no way like this of being justified by faith, for the securing and safe-guarding the glory of God's free grace, *Rom.* iii. 25, 26. when the Apostle hath in some verses together discoursed of the free justification of a sinner before God. He goes on to shew how this cuts the very comb, yea, throat of all self-exalting thoughts, ver. 27. *Where is boasting then? it is excluded: By what law? of works; nay, but by the law of faith.* Princes of all wrongs, most disdain and abhor to see their royal bed defiled; so jealous they have been of this, that for the prevention of all suspicion of such a foul fact, it hath been of old the custom of the greatest Monarchs, that those who were their favourites, and admitted into nearest attendance upon their own persons and Queens, should be Eunuchs; such, whose very disability of nature might remove all suspicion of any such attempt by them. Truly, God is more jealous of having the glory of his grace ravished by the pride and self-glorying of the creature, than ever any Prince was of having his Queen defloured. And, therefore, to secure it from any such horrid abuse, he hath chosen faith, this *Eunuch grace* (as I may call it), to stand so nigh him, and be employed by him in this high act of grace, whose very nature (being a self-

self-emptying grace) renders it uncapable of entering into any such design against the glory of God's grace; faith hath two hands: with one it pulls off its own righteousness, and throws it away, as *David* did *Saul*'s armour; with the other it puts on Christ's righteousness over the soul's shame, as that in which it dares alone see God, or be seen of him. This makes it impossible (saith learned and holy *Master Ball*) how to conceive that faith and works should be conjoined as con-causes in justification, seeing the one, that is faith, attributes all to the free grace of God; the other, challenge to themselves: The one (that is faith) will aspire no higher, but to be the instrumental cause of free remission; the other can sit no lower, but to be the matter of justification; if works be accounted to us in the room or place of exact obedience in free justification, do they not supply the place? are they not advanced to the dignity of works complete and perfect in justification from justice? *Treatise of Covenant of Grace*, p. 70.

SECT. IV.

Fourthly, The mighty influence, yea, universal, that faith hath upon all her sister-graces. What makes the Sun so glorious a creature, but because it is a common good, and serves all the lower world with light and influence? Faith is a grace, whose ministry God useth as much for the good of the spiritual world in the Saints (called in Scripture, the *new creation*, Gal. vi. 15.) as he doth the Sun for the corporeal. *Nothing is hid from the heat of the Sun*, Psalm xix. 6. And no grace that faith's influence reacheth not unto.

First, Faith finds all the graces with work. As the rich tradesman gives out his wool, some to this man, and some to that, who all work of the stock he gives them; so that when he ceaseth to trade, they must also, because they have no stock but what he affords them. Thus faith gives out to every grace what they act upon. If faith trades not, neither can they. To instance in one or two for all the rest. Repentance is a sweet grace, but set on work by faith. *Nineveh*'s repentance is attributed unto their faith: Jonah iii. 5.

The

The people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sack-cloth. It is very like their repentance was no more than legal, but it was as good as their faith; if their faith had been better so would their repentance. All is quiet in an unbelieving soul; no news of repentance, nor noise of any complaint made against sin, till faith begins to stir. When faith presents the threatening, and binds the truth and terror of it to the conscience, then the sinner hath something to work upon. As light actuates colours, and brings the eye acquainted with its object, whereupon it falls to work, so doth faith actuate sin in the conscience. Now musing thoughts will soon rise, and, like clouds, thicken apace into a storm, till they bespread the soul with an universal blackness of horror and trembling for sin: But then also the creature is at a loss, and can go no further in the business of repentance till faith sends in more work from the promise, by presenting a pardon therein to the returning soul; which no sooner is heard and believed by the creature, but the work of repentance goes on apace. Now the cloud of horror and terror, which the fear of wrath (from consideration of the threatening) had gathered in the conscience, dissolves into a soft rain of Evangelical sorrow, at the report which faith makes from the promise.

Love is another heavenly grace: But faith gathers the fuel that makes this fire; speak Christian, whose soul now flames with love to God, was it always thus? No sure, there was a time (I dare say) when thy hearth was cold, not a spark of this fire to be found on the altar of thy heart. How is it then, Christian, that now thy soul loves God, whom before thou didst scorn and hate? Surely thou hast heard some good news from Heaven, that hath changed thy thoughts of God, and turned the stream of thy love, which ran another way, into this happy channel. And who can be the messenger besides faith, that brings any good news from Heaven to the soul? It is faith that proclaims the promise, opens Christ's excellencies, pours out his name, for which the Virgins love him; when faith hath drawn a character of Christ out of the word, and presented him in his love and loveliness to the soul, now the creature is sweetly inveigled in his affections to him; now the Christian hath a copious theme to enlarge upon in his thoughts, whereby to endear Christ more and more unto him. *Unto him that believes, he is precious,* 1 Peter

ter i. 7. and the more faith, the more precious. If we should sit in the same room by the dearest friend we had in all the world, and our eyes were held from seeing him, we would take no more notice of him, and give no more respect to him than to a stranger: But if one come and whisper us in the ear, and tell us this is such a dear friend of yours, that once laid down his life to save yours, that hath made you heirs to all the goodly estate that he hath, will you not shew your respect to him? O! how our hearts would work in our breasts, and make haste to come forth in some passionate expression of our dear affection to him; how heartily ashamed would we be for our unbecoming behaviour towards him, though occasioned by our ignorance of him? Truly thus it is; so long as faith's eye hath a mist before it, or is inactive, and as it were asleep in the dull habit, the Christian may sit very nigh Christ in an ordinance, in a providence, and be very little affected with him, and drawn out in love to him. But when faith is awake to see him as he passeth by in his love and loveliness, and active to make report to the soul of the sweet excellencies it sees in Christ, as also of his dear bleeding love to his soul; the Christian's love now cannot chuse, but spring and leap in his bosom at the voice of faith, as the babe did in *Elizabeth*'s womb at the salutation of *Mary*.

Secondly, As faith sets the other graces on work, by actuating their objects, about which they are conversant; so faith helps them all to work, by fetching strength from Christ to act and re-inforce them; faith is not only the instrument to receive the righteousness of Christ for our justification, but also it is the great instrument to receive grace from Christ for our sanctification; *Of his fulness we receive grace for grace*, John i. 16. But how do we receive it? even by faith: Faith unites the soul to Christ; and as by a pipe laid close to the mouth of a fountain, water is carried to our houses for the supply of the whole family; so by faith is derived to the soul supply in abundance, for the particular offices of all the several graces. *He that believes, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters*, John vii. 38; that is, he that hath faith, and lives in the exercise of it, shall have a flow and an increase of all other graces, called here *living waters*. Hence it is, that the Saints, when they would advance to a high pitch in other graces, they pray for the increase

crease of their faith. Our Saviour, *Luke* xvii. 3, 4. sets his Apostles a very hard lesson, when he would wind up their love to such a high pitch, as to forgive their offending brother seven times in a day. Now mark, ver. 5. *The Apostles* (apprehending the difficulty of the duty) *said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.* But why did they not rather say, increase our love, seeing that was the grace they were to exercise in forgiving their brother? Surely it was because love hath its increase from faith; if they had more faith on Christ, they might be sure they would have more love to their brother also. The more strongly they could believe on Christ for the pardon of their own sins, not seven, but seventy times in a day committed against God, the more easily it would be to forgive their brother offending themselves seven times a day; which interpretation our Saviour's reply to their prayer for faith favours, ver. 6. *And the Lord said, if ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye might say to this sycamore tree, be thou plucked up by the root; and it should obey you.* Where Christ shews the efficacy of justifying faith, by the power of a faith of miracles, as if he had said, you have hit on the right way to get a forgiving spirit. It is faith indeed that would enable you to conquer the unmercifulness of your hearts, though it were as deeply rooted in you as this sycamore tree is in the ground, yet by faith you should be able to pluck it up: When we would have the whole tree fruitful, we think we do enough to water the root, knowing what the root sucks from the earth will soon disperse into the branches. Thus, that sap and fatness, faith, which is the radical grace, draws from Christ, will be quickly diffused through the branches of the other graces, and tasted in the pleasantness of their fruit.

Thirdly, Faith defends the Christian in the exercise of all his graces. *By faith we stand*, Rom. xi. 20. as a soldier under the protection of his shield, stands his ground, and doth his duty, notwithstanding all the shot that are made against him, when faith fails, then every grace is put to the rout. *Abraham's* simplicity and sincerity, was put to disorder, when he dissembled with *Abimilech* concerning his wife? and why, but because his faith failed him? *Job's* patience received a wound, when his hand grew weary, and his shield of faith, which should have covered him, hung down. Indeed no grace is safe, if from under the wing of

faith; therefore Christ tells Peter, he *had prayed that his faith should not fail*, Luke xxii. 32. This was the reserve that Christ took care should be kept, to recover his other graces, when foiled by the enemy, and to bring him off that encounter, wherein he was so sadly bruised: It is said, that Christ could *not do many mighty things in his own country, because of their unbelief*, Mat. xiii. 58. Neither can Satan do any great hurt to the Christian, so long as faith is vigorous: It is true, he aims to fight faith above all, as that which keeps him from coming at the rest, but he is not able long to stand before it. Let a Saint be never so humble, patient, devout, alas! Satan will easily pick some hole or other in these graces, and break in upon him when he stands in the best way, if faith be not in the field to cover these. This is the grace that makes him face about, and take him to his heels, 1 *Pet.* v. 9.

Fourthly, Faith alone procures acceptance with God for all the other graces, and their works. *By faith Abel offered that excellent sacrifice,* to which God gave such a gracious testimony, *Heb.* xi. 4. When the Christian hath wrought hardest in a day, and hath spun the finest thread of obedience at the wheel of duty, he is afraid to carry home his work at night, with an expectation of any acceptance at God's hands, for his works sake: No, it is faith he makes use of, to present it through Christ to God for acceptance; we are said, 1 *Pet.* ii. 5. *to offer up spiritual sacrifice acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*, that is, by faith in Christ; for without faith, Christ makes none of our sacrifices acceptable. God takes nothing kindly, but what the hand of faith presents; and so prevalent is faith with God, that he will take light gold, broken services at her hand; which, were they to come alone, would be rejected with indignation: As a favourite that hath the ear of his Prince, finds it easy to get his poor kindred entertained at Court also; so *Joseph* brought his brethren into *Pharaoh's* presence with great demonstrations of favour shewn them by him for his sake. And *Esther* gained *Mordecai* high preferment in *Ahassuerus'* Court, who upon his own credit could get no further than to sit at the gate. Thus faith brings those works and duties into God's presence, which else were sure to be shut out, and pleading the righteousness of Christ, procures them to be received into such high favour with God, that

that they become his delight, *Prov.* xv. 8. and as a pleasant perfume in his nostrils, *Mal.* iii. 4.

Fifthly, Faith brings in succours, when other graces fail. Two ways the Christian's graces may fail: In their activity, or in their evidence.

First, In their activity, it is low water sometimes with the Christian: He cannot act so freely and vigourously then, as at another time, when the tide runs high, through divine assistance, that flow in upon him; those temptations which he could at one time snap asunder, as easily as *Sampson* did his cords of flax; at another time he is sadly hampered with, and cannot shake them off; those duties which he performs with delight and joy, when his grace is in a healthful plight; at another time he pants and blows at, as much as a sick man doth to go up a hill, so heavily doth he find them come off. Were not the Christian ill now on it, if he had no coming in, but from his own shop of duty? Here now is the excellency of faith, it succours the Christian in this his bankrupt condition: As *Joseph* got over his brethren to him, and nourished them out of his granaries all the time of famine, so doth faith the Christian in this his penury of grace and duty: And this it doth two ways.

First, By laying claim to the fulness of that grace which is in Christ as its own; why art thou dejected, O my soul, saith the Christian's faith, for thy weak grace? There is enough in Christ, all fulness dwells in him; it pleased the Father it should be so, and that to supply thee in thy wants and weaknesses: It is a ministerial fulness; as the clouds carry rain, not for themselves but the earth, so doth Christ his fulness of grace for thee. *He is made of God to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption,* 1 *Cor.* i. 30. When the rags of the Christian's own righteousness discourage and shame him, faith hath a robe to put on, that covers all this uncomliness; Christ is my righteousness, saith faith, and *in him we are complete*, Col. ii. 10. Faith hath two hands, a working hand, and a receiving hand; and the receiving hand relieves the working hand, or else there would be a poor house kept in the Christian's bosom. We find *Paul* himself but in a starving condition, for all the comfort his own graces could afford him; he is a wretched man in his own account, if these be all he hath to live upon, *Rom.* vii. 24. yet even then, when he sees nothing

in his own cupboard, his faith puts forth its receiving hand to Christ, and he is presently set at a rich feast; for which you find him giving thanks; *ver.* 25. *I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Secondly, Faith succours the Christian in the weakness and inactivity of his graces, by applying the promises for the Saints preseverance in grace; it brings great comfort to a sick man, though very weak at present, to hear his Physician tell him, that though he is low and feeble, yet there is no fear he will die: The present weakness of grace is sad, but the fear of falling quite away far worse, Now faith, and only faith, can be the messenger to bring this good news to the soul, that it shall persevere, sense and reason are quite nonplussed here. It seems impossible to them, that such a bruised reed should bear up against all the counterblasts of hell, because they consider only what grace itself can do, and finding it so ever-matched by the power and policy of Satan, think it but rational to give the victory to the stronger side; but faith when it seeth symptons of death in the Saint's grace, finds life in the promise, and comforts the soul with this, that the faithful God will not suffer his grace to see corruption[9]; he hath undertook the care of his Saints, *Job.* xv. 2. *Every branch in me that beareth fruit, he purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit.* When *Hazael* came to enquire of *Elisha* for his sick Master, whether he should live or die; the *Prophet* sent him with this answer back unto the King his Master, *Thou mayest certainly recover, howbeit the Lord hath shewed me that he shall surely die,* 2 King. viii. 10. That is, he might certainly recover for all his disease, but he should die by the traiterous bloody hand of *Hazael* his servant: When the Christian consults with his faith, and enquires of it, whether his weak grace will fail or hold out, die or live, faith's answer is, *thy weak grace may certainly die and fall away, but the Lord hath shewed me it shall live and persevere,* that is, in regard of its own weakness and the mutability of man's nature, the Christian's grace might certainly die and come to nothing, but God hath shewn faith in the promise, that it shall certainly live and recover out of its lowest weakness: What *David* said in regard of his house, that every Christian may say in regard of his grace. Though his grace be not so with God, so strong, so unchangeable

changeable in itself, yet he hath made with me an everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure ; for this is all my salvation and my desire, 2 *Sam.* xxiii. 5. This salt of the Covenant it is, that shall keep (saith faith) thy weak grace from corruption. *Why art thou cast down* (saith the *Psalmist*) *O my soul? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God;* Psal. xlii. 11. The health of *David's* countenance, was not in his countenance, but in his God, and this makes his faith silence his fears, and so peremptorily resolve upon it, that there is a time coming (how near so ever he now lies to the graves mouth) when he shall yet praise him. The health and life of thy grace lie both of them, not in thy grace (saith faith) but in God, who is thy God ; therefore I shall yet live and praise him. I do not wonder that the weak Christian is sad, when he sees his sickly face in any other glass but this.

Secondly, The Christian's grace may fail in the evidence of it: It may disappear as stars do in a cloudy night! how oft do we hear the Christian say in an hour of desertion and temptation, I know not whether I love God or no? I dare not say I have any true godly sorrow for sin ; indeed I have thought formerly these graces had a being in me ; but now I am at a loss what to think, yea, sometimes I am ready to fear the worst. Now in this dark benighted state, faith under-girds the soul's ship, and hath two anchors it casts forth, whereby the soul is staid from being driven upon the devouring quick sands of despair and horror.

First. Faith makes a discovery of the rich mercy in Christ to poor sinners, and calls the soul to look up to it, when it hath lost sight of his own grace : It is no small comfort to a man that hath lost his acquittance for a debt paid, when he remembers that the man he deals with is a merciful good man, though his discharge be not presently to be found. That God whom thou hast to do with, is very gracious ; what thou hast lost he is ready to restore ; (the evidence of thy grace I mean) *Psal.* li. Yea, saith faith, if it were true what thou fearest, that thy grace was never true ; there is mercy enough in God's heart to pardon all thy former hypocrisy, if now thou comest in the sincerity of thy heart, and so faith persuades the soul to cast itself upon

upon God in Christ; wilt thou not, saith faith, expect to find as much mercy at God's hands, as thou canst at man's? it is not beyond the line of created mercy, to forgive many unkindnesses, and much unfaithfulness, upon an humble sincere acknowledgment of the same. The world is not so bad, but it abounds with parents that can do thus much for their children, and masters for their servants; and is that hard for God to do, which is so easy in his creature? Thus faith vindicates God's Name; and so long as we have not lost the sight of God's merciful heart, our head will be kept above water, though we want the evidence of our own grace.

Secondly, Faith goes further, when the Christian cannot see grace in his own bosom, then faith makes a discovery of it in the promise, where it may be had. And it is some comfort, though a man hath no bread in his cupboard, to hear there is some to be had in the Market. O saith the Christian, there were some hope, if I could find but those relentings and meltings of soul which others have for sin; then I could run under the shadow of that promise, and take comfort, *blessed are they which mourn, for they shall be comforted*, Mat. v. but alas! my heart is as hard as flint. Well, saith faith, for thy comfort know, there are not only promises to the mourning soul, and broken heart, but there are promises, that God will break the heart, and give a *spirit of mourning*; so for other graces, not only promises to those that fear God, but *to put the fear of God into our hearts*: Not only promises to those that walk in his Statutes, and keep his judgments, but also to *put his Spirit within us, and cause us to walk in his Statutes. Ezek.* xxxvi. 27: Why then O my soul, dost thou sit here bemoaning thyself, for what thou sayest thou hast not, when thou knowest where thou mayest have it for going? As *Jacob* said to his sons, *Why do ye look one upon another? behold I have heard there is corn in Egypt; get ye down thither, and buy for us from thence, that we may live and not die*, Gen. xlii. 1, 2. Thus faith rouseth the Christian out of his amazed thoughts upon which his troubled spirit dwells like one destitute of counsel, not knowing what to do; and turns his complaints, wherein he must starve, into fervent prayer for that grace he wants. There is bread in the promise (saith faith) sit not here languishing in despondency, but get

get you down upon your knees, and humbly, but valiantly besiege the throne of grace, for grace in this time of need. And certainly, the Christian may sooner get a new evidence of his grace, by pleading the promise, at the throne of grace, than by yielding so far to his unbelieving thoughts, as to sit down, and melt away his strength in the bitterness of his spirit, without using the means, which he will never do to any purpose, till faith brings thus much encouragement from the promise, that what he wants is there to be had freely.

SECT. V.

Fifthly, As faith succours the Christian when his other graces fail him most, so it brings in his comfort, when they most abound. Faith is to the Christian; as *Nehemiah* was to *Artaxerxes,* Nehem. ii. 1. Of all the graces, this is the Christian's cup-bearer: The Christian takes the wine of joy out of faith's hand, rather than any other grace, *Rom.* xv. 13. *The God of peace fill you with all joy in believing.* It is observable, 1 *Pet.* i. to see how the Apostle there doth as it were cross his hands, as once *Jacob* did in blessing his son *Joseph's* children, and gives the pre-eminence to faith, attributing the Christian's joy to his faith, rather than his love; ver. 8. *Whom having not seen ye love, in whom though now you see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.* Mark, *believing ye rejoice,* here is the door, where all the Christian's joy comes in at. It is Christ that we are in this respect allowed only to rejoice in, *Phil.* iii. 3. *For we are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh;* where Christ is made the sole subject of our rejoicing, in opposition to all else; even our graces themselves, which become flesh, when thus rejoiced and gloried in. Christ's blood is the wine that only glads the heart of God by way of satisfaction to his justice, and therefore only that can bring true gladness into the heart of man. When Christ promiseth the Comforter, he tells his Disciples from what vessel he should draw the wine of joy that he was to give them, *John* xvi. 15. *He shall take*

take of mine, and shall shew it you. No grape of our own Vine is prest into this Cup; as if Christ had said, when he comes to comfort you with the pardon of your sins, he shall take of mine, not any thing of yours; my blood by which I purchased your peace with God; not your own tears of repentance, by which you have mourned for your sins. All the blessed privileges which believers are in-stated into, are the fruits of Christ's purchase, not our earnings; Now the Christian's joy flowing in from Christ, and not from any thing that he poor creature doth or hath; hence it comes to pass, that faith above all the graces, brings in the Christian's joy and comfort, because this is the grace that improves Christ, and what is Christ's, for the soul's advantage; as of grace, so of comfort; Faith is the good spy that makes discovery of the excellencies in Christ, and then makes report of all to the soul it sees in him and knows of him. It is faith that broaches the promises, turns the cock, and sets them running into the soul. It doth not only shew the soul how excellent Christ is, and what dainties are in the promises; but it applies Christ to the soul, and carves out the sweet viands that are in the promises; yea, it puts them into the very mouth of the soul, it masticates the promise so, that the Christian is filled with its strength and sweetness; till faith comes and brings news of the soul's welcome; O how uncomfortably do poor creatures sit at the Table of the promise? like *Hannah, they weep and eat not;* no, alas! they dare not be so bold; but when faith comes, then the soul falls to, and makes a satisfying meal; no dish on the Table but faith will taste of. Faith knows God sets them not on to go off untouched: It is though an humble, yet a bold grace, because it knows it cannot be so bold with God in his own way, as it is welcome.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Sheweth unbelief to have the precedency among sins, as faith hath among graces.

IS faith the chief of graces? this may help us to conceive of the horrible nature of unbelief: This surely will deserve as high a place among sins, as faith among graces. Unbelief, is the Prince of sins: As faith is the radical grace, so is unbelief a radical sin, a sinning sin: As of all sinners, those are most infamous, who are ring-leaders and make others sin, which is the brand which that God hath set upon *Jeroboam's* name, *Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who sinned, and made Israel to sin,* 1 Kings xiv. 16. So among sins they are most horrid that are most productive of others, such is unbelief above any other: It is a ring-leading sin, a sin making sin. The first poisonous breath which *Eve* sucked in from the tempter, was sent in these words, *Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?* Gen iii. 1. As if he had said, consider well on the matter, do you believe God meant so? can you think so ill of God, as to believe he would keep the best fruit of the whole garden from you? this was the Traitors gate at which all other sins entered into her heart; and it continues to this day of the same use to Satan, for the hurrying souls into other sins, called therefore *an evil heart of unbelief in departing from God,* Heb. iii. 12. The Devil sets up this sin of unbelief, as a blind betwixt the sinner and God; that the shot which come from the threatening, levelled at the sinner's breast, may not be dreaded by him; and then the wretch can be as bold with his lust as the Pioneer is at his work, when he hath got his basket of earth between him and the enemies bullets: Nay, this unbelief doth not only choak the bullets of wrath which are sent out of the Law's fiery mouth, but it damps the motions of grace which come from the Gospel; all the offers of love which God makes to an unbelieving heart, they fall like seed into dead earth, or like sparks into a river, they are out as soon as they fall in.

The word (it is said, *Heb.* iv. 2.) *did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.* The strength of the whole body of sin lies in this lock of unbelief. There is no mastering of a sinner, while unbelief is in power; this will carry all arguments away (whether they be from law or gospel) as easily as *Samson* did the door, posts, bar and all, from the city *Gaza,* Judg. xvi. 2. It is a sin that doth keep the field; that which the sinner is last convinced of, and the Saint ordinarily last conqueror of. It is one of the chief strengths and fastnesses unto which the Devil retreats when other sins are routed. O! how oft do we hear a poor sinner confess and bewail other sins (he hath lived in formerly) with tears, but will not hearken yet to the offer of mercy in Christ; bid him believe on Christ, and he shall be saved (which was the doctrine *Paul* and *Silas* preached to the trembling jaylor): Alas! he dares not, he will not, you can hardly persuade him it is his duty to do so. The Devil hath now betaken himself to this city of gates and bars, where he stands upon his guard; and the more strongly to fortify himself, he hath the most specious pretences for it of any other sin. It is a sin that he makes the humbled soul commit, out of a fear of sinning, and so stabs the good name of God, for fear of dishonouring him by a presumptuous faith. Indeed it is a sin by which Satan intends to put the greatest scorn upon God, and unfold all his cankered malice against him at once. It is by faith that the Saints have all obtained a good report; yea, it is by the Saints faith, that God hath a good report in the world; and, by unbelief, the Devil doth his worst, to raise an evil report of God in the world, as if he were not what his own promise, and his Saint's faith witness him to be. In a word, it is a sin that hell gapes for of all other.

There are two sins that claim a pre-eminence in hell; *hypocrisy* and *unbelief;* and therefore other sinners are threatened *to have their portion with hypocrites,* Mat. xxiv. 5. and *with unbelievers,* Luke xii. 46. as if those infernal mansions were taken up principally for these, and all others were but inferior prisoners. But of the two, unbelief is the greatest, and that which may, with an emphasis, be called above any other, *the damning sin. He that believes not is condemned already,* John iii. 18. He hath his *mittimus* already to jail; yea, he is in it already in a sense; he hath the brand of a damned person on him. The *Jews* are said, Rom. xi.

xi. 32. *to be shut up in unbelief.* A surer prison the Devil cannot keep a sinner in. Faith shuts the soul up in the promise of life and happiness, as God shut *Noah* into the ark. It is said, Gen. 7. 16. *The Lord shut him in;* thus faith shuts the soul up in Christ, and the Ark of his Covenant from all fear of danger from heaven or hell; and, on the contrary, unbelief shuts a soul up in guilt and wrath, that there is no more possibility of escaping damnation for an unbeliever, than for one to escape burning that is shut up in a fiery oven; no help can come to the sinner, so long as this bolt of unbelief is on the door of his heart. As our salvation is attributed to faith, rather than to other graces, though none wanting in a saved person; so sinners damnation is attributed to their unbelief, though other sins found with it in the person damned; the Spirit of God passeth over the *Jews* hypocrisy, murmuring, rebellion, and lays their destruction at the door of this sin of unbelief, Heb. iii. 19. *They could not enter in because of unbelief.* O sinners (who live under the gospel) if you perish, know before hand, what is your undoing, it is your unbelief. If a malefactor be offered his life by the Judge, upon reading a *Psalm* of mercy, and he reads it not; we may say, his not reading hangs him. The promise of the gospel is this *Psalm* of mercy which God offers in his Son to law-condemned sinners; believing is reading this Psalm of mercy; if thou believest not, and art damned, thou goest to hell rather for thy final unbelief, than any of thy other sins, for which a discharge is offered thee upon thy receiving Christ, and believing on him. Let this cause us all to rise up against this sin, as the *Philistines* did against *Samson,* whom they called the destroyer of their country, *Judg.* xvi. 24. This is the destroyer of your souls, and that is worse, yea, it destroys them with a bloodier hand than other sins, that are not aggravated with this. We find two general heads of inditements, upon which the whole world of sinners shall be condemned at the great day, 2 *Thes.* i. 8. where Christ's coming to judgment is exprest; and those miserable undone creatures, that shall fall under his condemning sentence, they are comprized in these two; such as *know not God, and such as obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ.* The Heathens negative unbelief of the gospel, shall not be charged upon them, because they never had it preached to them. No, they shall be sent to hell for not knowing God, and so

shall escape with a lighter damnation by far, than *Jews* or Christian *Gentiles*, to whom the gospel hath been preached (though to some of these, with a stronger and longer continued beam of light than others). The dismal charge which shall be brought against these, is, that they have not obeyed the gospel of our Lord Jesus, that is, not believed on Christ, called therefore *the obedience of faith,* Rom. xvi. 26. And certainly we cannot but think, that there shall be a torment proper to these gospel-refusers, which those that never had shall not feel in hell. And among those that obey not the gospel, the greatest vengeance waits for them that have had the longest treaty of mercy allowed them. These are they who put God to the greatest expence of mercy, and therefore must necessarily expect the greatest proportion of wrath and vengeance to be measured to them; yea, their unbelief puts Christ and the grace of God in him, to the greatest shame and scorn that is possible for creatures to do; and it is but righteous that God should therefore put their unbelief and themselves with it to the greatest shame before men and Angels.

CHAP. IV.

Some Arguments to make us serious in the trial of our Faith, with Directions taken from the manner of the Spirits working Faith.

Is faith the chief of graces? Let this make us the more careful we be not cheated in our faith. There are some things of so inconsiderable worth, that they will not pay us for the pains and care we take about them; and there to be choice and scrupulous is folly. But there are other things of such worth, and weighty consequence, that none but he that means to call his wisdom in question, can be willing to be mistaken in. Who, that is wise, would pay for a precious stone, and have a pebble, or at best a *Bristol-stone* put upon him

him for his money? Who, when his life is at stake, and knows no way to save it, but by getting a rich drug which is very scarce, would not be very careful to have the right? O! my dear friends, doth it not infinitely more concern you, to be careful in your merchandize for this pearl of precious faith? can you be willing to take the Devil's false ware? a mock faith which he would cheat you with, rather than the faith unfeigned, which God hath to give unto his children; called, therefore, *the faith of God's Elect.* When thou goest to buy a garment, thou askest for the best in the shop. In the market thou wouldst have the best meat; when with the lawyer, the best counsel; and of the physician, the best directions for thy health. Art thou for the best in all, but for thy soul? wouldst thou not have a faith of the best kind also? If a man receives false money, who doth he wrong but himself? and if thou art gulled with a false faith, the loss is thy own, how wilt thou be confounded? when at God's bar thou producest thy faith, and hopest to save thyself with this, that thou believest on the Lord Jesus, but shalt have thy confidence rejected; and God tells thee to thy teeth, it is not faith, but a lye in thy right hand, and therefore he will not accept the payment, though it be Christ himself thou offerest; nay, that he will give thee up into the tormentor's hand, not only for not believing, but also for counterfeiting the King of heavens coin, which thou doest by pretending to faith, when it is a false one. This were enough to awaken your care in the trial of your faith; but to give further weight to the exhortation, note these three considerations.

SECT. I.

First, As thy faith is, so are all thy other graces: As a man's marriage is, so are all his children legitimate or illegitimate. Thus, as our marriage is to Christ, so all our graces are. Now, it is faith by which we are married to Christ. *I have espoused you to one husband,* saith *Paul* to the *Corinthians,* 2 Cor. xi. 2. how, but by their faith? It is faith whereby the soul gives its consent to take Christ for her husband. Now, if our faith be false, then our marriage

to

to Christ is feigned; and if that be feigned, then all our pretended graces are base-born; how goodly an out-side soever they have (as a bastard may have a fair face); our humility, patience, temperance, all bastards, and you know, *a bastard was not to enter into the Congregation,* Deut. xxiii. 2. No more shall any bastard grace enter the congregation of the just in heaven. He that hath children of his own, will not make another's bastard his heir. God hath children of his own to inherit heaven's glory, in whose hearts he hath by his own Spirit begotten those heavenly graces, which truly resemble his own holy nature; surely he will never settle it upon strangers, counterfeit believers, that are the Devil's brats.

Secondly, Consider, the excellency of true faith, makes false faith so much the more odious. It is by faith we *become the sons of God,* John i. 12. what a high presumption is it then, that by a false faith thou pretendest thyself to be a child of God, when no heaven-blood runs in thy veins, but hast more reason to look for thy kindred in hell, and derive thy pedigree from Satan; Rev. ii. 9. *I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews, and are not, but are the Synagogue of Satan.* God loaths such with his heart. A false friend is worse than an open enemy in man's judgment; and a hypocritical *Judas* more abhorred by God than a bloody *Pilate;* either therefore true faith, or pretend to none. The *Ape,* because he hath the face of a man, but not the soul of a man, is therefore the most ridiculous of all creatures: And of all sinners, none will be put more to shame, at the last day, than such as have aped the believer in some exterior postures of profession, but never had the spirit of a believer, so as to perform one vital act of faith. The *Psalmist* tells us of some, *whose image God will despise,* Psalm lxxiii. 20. It is spoken chiefly of the wicked man's temporal prosperity, which, for its short continuance, is compared to the image or representation of a thing in the fancy of a sleeping man. This God will despise at the great day, when he shall not give heaven, by the estates and honours that men had in the world, but tumble them down to hell, if graceless, as well as the poorest beggar in the world. But there is another sort of persons, whose image God will, at that day, despise more than these, and that is, the image of all temporary believers and unsound professors,

professors, who have a phantastical faith, which they set up like an image in their imaginations, and dance about it with as many self-pleasing thoughts as a man doth that is dreaming himself to be some great Prince; but this great idol shall then be broken, and the worshippers of it hissed down to hell with the greatest shame of any other.

Thirdly, None stand at greater disadvantage for the obtaining a true faith, than he who flatters himself with a false one. *Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him,* Prov. xxvi. 12; that is, more hope of persuading him; of all fools, the conceited fool is the worst. Pride makes a man incapable of receiving counsel. *Nebuchadnezzar*'s *mind* is said *to be hardened in pride,* Dan. v. 20. There is no reasoning with a proud man; he castles himself in his own opinion, and there stands upon his defence against all arguments that are brought. Bid a conceited Professor seek for faith, or he is undone; and the man will tell you, that you mistake. It is the ignorant person, or profane, you should go to on that errand; he thanks God he is not now to seek for a faith, and thus he blesseth himself in his good condition, when God knows, *he feeds on ashes; but a deceived heart hath so turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his own soul,* nor say, *is there not a life in my right hand?* Isaiah xliv. 20. The ignorant profane person, like the *Psalmist's man of low degree,* is plain *vanity.* It is not hard to make them acknowledge, that they have nothing, deserve nothing, can look for nothing as they are but hell and damnation; but such as pretend to faith, and content themselves with a false one, they are (like the men of high degree) *a lie,* which is vanity as well as the other, but with a specious cover over it, that hides it; therefore the Devil is forward to put poor silly souls on believing, that he may forestal the Spirits market, and prevent the creatures obtaining of a true faith, by cheating it with a counterfeit, like *Jeroboam*'s wicked policy, who to keep the *Israelites* from going to *Jerusalem,* and hankering after the true worship of God, set up something like a religious worship nearer hand at home in the *golden calves;* and this pleased many well enough, that they missed not their walk to *Jerusalem.* O! friends, take heed, therefore, of being cheated with a false faith. Every one, I know, would have the living child to be her's, and not the dead

dead one. We would all pass for such, as have true faith, but be not your own Judges: appeal to the Spirit of God, and let him with the sword of his Word come and decide the controversy, which faith is thine, the true or false.

SECT. II.

By this time you may be solicitous to know what your faith is, and how you may come to judge of the truth of it. Take these two directions: One taken from the manner of the Spirits working faith, the other from the properties of faith when it is wrought.

First, From the manner of the Spirits working faith in the soul: It is incomparably the greatest work that passeth upon the soul from the Spirit of Christ; it is called, *The exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe,* Eph. i. 19 O observe with what a heap of expressions the Spirit of God loads our weak understandings, that labouring under the weight of them, and finding the difficulty of reaching the significancy of them, we might be the more widened, to conceive of that power, which can never be fully understood by us (being indeed infinite, and so too bigg to be inclosed within the narrow walls of our understandings) power, greatness of power, exceeding greatness, and lastly exceeding greatness of his power, that is of *God.* What Angel in Heaven can tell us, what all these amount to? God (with reverence be it spoken) sets his whole force to this work: It is compared to no less than *the working of his mighty power,* which *he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, &c.* Ver. 20, 21. to raise any one from the dead is a mighty, an Almighty work; but to raise Christ from the dead, carries more wonder with it, than to raise any other; he had a heavier grave-stone to keep him down than any besides, the weight of a world's sin lay upon him, yet notwithstanding this, he is raised with power by the Spirit, not only out of the grave, but into glory. Now the power God puts forth upon the soul in working faith, is according to this of raising Christ, for indeed, the sinners soul is as really dead in sin, as Christ's body was in the grave

grave for sin. Now speak, poor creature, art thou any way acquainted with such a power of God, to have been at work in thee? or dost thou think slightly of believing, and so shew thyself a stranger to this mystery? certainly, this one thing might resolve many (if they desired to know their own state) that they have no faith, because they make it so trivial and light a matter, as if it were as easy to believe, as to say they do; and it were of no more difficulty to receive Christ into their souls by faith, than to put a bit of bread into their mouths with their hand. Ask some, whether ever such a day or time of God's power came over their heads, to humble them for sin, drive them out of themselves, and draw them effectually unto Christ; and they may answer you as those did *Peter*, when he asked *whether they had received the holy Ghost since they believed; They said unto him, we have not so much as heard whether there be any holy Ghost*, Acts xix. 2. so these might say, we know not whether there be any such power required to the working of faith.

But to a more particular consideration of this powerful work of the Spirit upon the soul for the production of faith; it will be necessary to consider what posture the Spirit of Christ finds the soul in before he begins this great work; and then how he makes his addresses to the soul; and what acts he puts forth upon the soul for the working faith.

First, For the posture: The Spirit finds the creature in such a state, as it neither can nor will contribute the least help to the work. As the *Prince of the world*, when he came to tempt Christ, *found nothing in him*, to befriend and further his tempting design; so when the Spirit of Christ comes, he finds as little encouragement from the sinner; no party within the castle of the soul, to side with him, when he comes first to set down before it, and lay siege to it: But all the powers of the whole man in arms against him: Hence it is that so many scornful answers are sent out to the summons that are given sinners to yield. *He came unto his own, and his own received him not*, John i. 11. Never was any garrison more resolved to stand out against the batteries of an assailing enemy, than the carnal heart is against all means that God useth to reduce it to his obedience. The noblest operations of the soul are *earthly*, *sensual*, and *devilish*, Jam. iii. 15. so

that, except sensual, and spiritual please one palate ; God, and the Devil agree ; there is no hope that a sinner of himself, should like the motion Christ makes, or that with any argument he should be won over to like it, so long as the ground of dislike remains in his earthly, sensual, and devilish nature.

Secondly, How the Spirit makes his addresses to the soul, and what acts he puts forth upon it for the working faith. Now the Spirit's address is suited to the several faculties of the soul ; the principal of which are, *understanding, conscience and will ;* these are like three forts, one within the other, which must all be reduced before the town be taken, the sinner I mean subdued to the obedience of faith : And to these the Spirit makes his particular addresses, putting forth an act of Almighty power upon every one of them, and that in this order ; *First*, the Spirit makes his approach to the understanding, and on it he puts forth an act of illumination : The Spirit will not work in a dark shop ; the first thing he doth in order to faith, is to beat out a window in the soul, and let in some light from Heaven : Hence believers are said *to be renewed in the spirits of their minds*, Eph. iv. 23. which the same Apostle calleth being *renewed in knowledge*, Col. iii. 10. By nature we know little of God, and nothing of Christ, or the way of salvation by him : The eye of the creature therefore must be opened to see the way of life, before he can by faith get into it. God doth not use to waft souls to Heaven, like passengers in a ship, who are shut under the hatches, and see nothing all the way they are sailing to their port; if so, that prayer might have been spared, which the *Psalmist*, inspired of God, breathes forth in the behalf of the blind *Gentiles*, Psal. lxvii. 2. *That thy way may be known upon Earth, and thy saving health among all Nations.* As faith is not a naked assent without affiance, and resting on Christ, so neither is it a blind assent, without some knowledge. If therefore thou continuest still in thy brutish ignorance, and knowest not what Christ is, and what he hath done for the salvation of poor sinners, how they are interested in him ; thou art far enough from believing : If the day be not broke in thy soul, much less is the Sun of righteousness arisen in thy soul.

Secondly, When the Spirit of God hath sprung with a divine

divine light into the understanding, then he makes his address to the conscience, and the act which passeth upon that, is an *act of conviction,* John xvi. 8. *He shall convince the world, &c.* Now this conviction is nothing but a reflection of the light that is in the understanding upon the conscience, whereby the creature feels the weight and force of those truths he knows, so as to be brought into a deep sense of them. Light in a direct beam heats not, nor doth knowledge swimming in the brain affect. Most under the Gospel, know that unbelief is damning sin, and that there is no name to be saved by but Christ's, yet how few of those know this so as to apply it to their own consciences, and to be affected with their own deplored state; who is a Scriptural convinced sinner, he who upon the clear evidence of the Word brought against him by the Spirit, is found by his own conscience to be so; speak now, poor creature, did ever such an act of the Spirit of God pass upon thee as this? which that thou mayest the better discern, try thyself by these few characters.

First, A sinner truly convinced, is not only convinced of this or that sin, but of the evil of all sin. It is an ill sign, when a person seems in a passion to cry out at one sin, and to be senseless of another: A par-boiled conscience is not right; soft in one part, and hard in another, the Spirit of God is uniform in its work.

Secondly, The convinced sinner is not only convinced of acts of sin, but of the state of sin also; he is not only affected with what he hath done (this law broken, and that mercy abused) but with what his state and present condition is. *Peter* leads *Simon Magus* from that one horrid act he committed, to the consideration of that which was worse, the dismal state that he descovered him to be in; *I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity,* Acts viii. 23. Many will confess they do not as they should, who will not think by any means so ill of themselves, that theirs' is a state of sin and death; whereas the convinced soul freely puts himself under this sentence, owns his condition and dissembles not his pedigree; I am a most vile wretch (saith he) a limb of Satan, full of sin, as the toad is of poison; my whole nature lies in wickedness, even as the dead rotten carcass doth in its putrefacti-

on. I am a child of wrath, born to no other inheritance than hell flames, and if God tread me down thither, I have not one righteous syllable to object against his proceedings, but there is that in my own conscience which will clear him from having done me any wrong.

Thirdly, The convinced sinner doth not only condemn himself for what he hath done and is, but he despairs, as to any thing he can do to save himself. Many, though they go so far as to confess they are vile wretches, and have lived wickedly, and for this deserve to die; yet, when they have put the rope about their neck by a self-condemning act, they are so far from being convinced of their own impotency, that they hope to cut it, with their repentance, reformation, and a bundle of good works, which they think shall redeem their credit with God, and recover his favour: And this comes to pass, because the plough of conviction did not go deep enough to tear up those secret roots of self-confidence, with which the heart of every sinner is woefully tainted; whereas every soul thoroughly convinced by the Spirit, is a self-despairing soul; he sees himself beyond his own help, like a poor condemned prisoner, laden with so many heavy irons, that he sees it is impossible for him to make an escape with all his skill or strength out of the hands of justice; O friends, look whether the work be gone thus far in your souls. Most that perish, it is not their disease that kills them, but their Physician; they think to cure themselves, and this leaves them uncurable. Speak soul, did the Lord ever ferret thee out of this burrow where so many earth themselves? Art thou as much at a loss what to do, as sensible for what thou hast done? Dost thou see hell in thy sin, and despair in thyself? Hath God got thee out of this *Keilah,* and convinced thee if thou shouldst stay in the self-confidence of thy repentance reformation, and duties, they would all deliver thee up into the hands of God's justice and wrath, when they shall come against thee? then indeed thou hast escaped one of the finest snares that the wit of hell can weave.

Fourthly, The convinced sinner is not only convinced of sin, so as to condemn and despair of himself, but he is convinced of a full provision laid up in Christ for self-condemned and self-despairing ones, *John* xvi. *He shall convince the world of sin,* ver. 9. *and of righteousness,* ver. 10.

And

And this is as necessary an antecedent to faith, as any of the former. Without this, the soul convinced of sin, is more like to go to the gallows with *Judas*, or fall on the sword of the Law, as the *Jailor* attempted to do on his (when he thought his condition desperate) than think of coming to Christ.

The third and last faculty to be dealt with is the *Will*, and on this (for the production of faith) the Spirit puts forth an *act of renovation*, whereby he doth sweetly, but powerfully incline the will (which before was rebellious and refractory) to accept of Christ, and make a free deliberate choice of him, for his Lord and Saviour: I say a free choice, not only cudgelled into him with apprehensions of wrath, as one may run under an enemies pent-house in a storm, whose door he would have passed by in fair weather. Speak soul, dost thou go to Christ, not only for safety, but delight? so the Spouse, *I sat under his shadow with great delight*, Cant. ii. 3. As *Ruth*, who when *Naomi* spake the worst she could to discourage her, yet liked her mother's company too well, to lose it for those troubles that attended her; speak soul, hath the Spirit of God thus put his golden key into the lock of thy will, to open the everlasting door of thy heart to let Christ the King of Glory in? Hath he not only opened the eye of thy understanding, as he awaked asleep in prison, and caused the chains of senselessness and stupidity to fall off thy conscience, but also opened the iron gate of thy will to let thee out of the prison of impenitency, where even now thou wert fast bolted in, yea, brought thee to knock at Heaven's door for entertainment, as *Peter* did at the house of *Mary* (where the Church was met); be of good comfort, thou mayest know assuredly, that God hath sent not his Angel, but his own Spirit, and hath delivered thee out of the hand of sin, Satan, and justice.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

Where our faith is put upon trial by its obedience, with some particulars faith's obedience is stampt with.

THIS choice excellent faith, is an obediential faith, that is true faith on the promise, works obedience to the command. *Abraham* is famous for his obedience, no command how difficult soever, came amiss to him: He is an obedient servant indeed, that when he doth but hear his master knock with his foot, leaves all and runs to know his will and pleasure: Such a servant had God of *Abraham*, *who raised up the righteous man from the East; called him to his foot:* Isaiah xli. 2. But what was the spring that set *Abraham*'s obedience going? see for this, *Heb.* xi. 8. *By faith* Abraham, *when he was called to go out into a place, which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and went out, &c.* As it is impossible to please God without faith, so it is impossible not to desire to please God with faith. It may well go for an idol faith, that hath hands but doth not work, feet but doth not walk in the statutes of God. No sooner had Christ cured the woman in the Gospel of her fever, but it is said, *she rose and ministred unto them,* Mat. viii. 15. Thus, the believing soul stands up and ministers unto Christ, in gratitude and obedience. Faith is not lazy, it inclines the soul to work; it sends the creature not to bed, there to snort away his time in ease and sloth, but into the field: The night of ignorance and unbelief, that was the creature's sleeping time; but when the Sun of righteousness ariseth, and it is day in the soul, then the creature riseth and goeth forth to his labour. The first words that break out of faith's lips, are *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Acts ix. 6. Faith turns the *Jordan*, and alters the whole course of a man. *We were* (saith the Apostle) *foolish and disobedient,* Tit. iii. 3. *But after the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared,* ver. 4. then the case was altered, as it follows. And therefore take your foul fingers

fingers off the promise, and pretend no more to faith, if ye be children of *Belial*, such, whose necks do not freely stoop to this yoke of obedience. The Devil himself may as soon pass for a believer, as a disobedient soul. Other things he can shew as much as you ; dost thou pretend to knowledge ? thou wilt not deny the Devil to be a greater Scholar than thyself, and that in Scripture knowledge ; dost thou believe the Scripture to be true ? and doth not he more strongly ? dost thou tremble ? he much more : It is obedience he wants, and this makes him a Devil, and it will make thee like him also.

Question, But you may ask, what stamp is there to be found on faith's obedience, which will distinguish it from all counterfeits ? for there are many fair semblances of obedience which the Devil will never grudge.

Answer, First, Faith's obedience begins at the heart, and from thence it diffuseth and dilates itself to the outward man, till it over-spreads the whole man in a sincere endeavour. As in natural life, the first part that lives is the heart, so the first that faith subdues into obedience is the heart : It is called a *faith which purifieth the heart ;* Acts xv. 9. And the believing *Romans obeyed from the heart the form of Doctrine which was delivered to them*, Rom. vi. 17. Whereas a false faith, which apes the true, begins without and there ends. All the seeming good works of a counterfeit believer, are like the beautiful colour in a picture, which comes not from a principle of life within, but the Painter's pencil without ; such were those, *John* ii. 23. who are said *to believe on Christ.* But, *Christ did not commit himself to them*, ver. 24. and why ? *see ver. 25. for he knew what was in man ;* he cared not for the painted porch and godly outside ; he knew what was in man, and by that knowledge he knew them to be rotten at core, naught at heart, before they were specked on the skin of their exterior conversation.

Question, But how may I know my obedience is the obedience of the heart ?

Answer, If it comes from love, then it is the obedience of the heart. He commands the heart, that is master of its love. The castle must needs yield, when he that keeps it, and hath the keys of it, submits. Love is the affection that governs this royal Fort of man's heart ; we give our hearts

to

to them we give our love; thus it is, that faith bring the heart over into subjection and obedience to God, by putting it under a law of love, *Gal.* v. 6. *faith which worketh by love.* First, Faith worketh love, and then it worketh by it. As first the workman sets an edge on his tools, and then he carves and cuts with them; so faith sharpens the soul's love to God, and then acts by it; or as a statuary, to make some difficult piece, finding his hands numb, that he cannot handle his tools so nimbly as he should, goes first to the fire, and with the help of its heat, become agile and active, then to work he falls; so faith brings the soul, listless enough (God knows) to any duty, unto the meditation of the matchless love of God in Christ, and at this fire faith stays the Christian's thoughts, till his affections begin to kindle to some sense of his love of God, and now the Christian bestirs himself for God with might and main.

Question Second, But how may I know my obedience is from love?

Answ. Jn. 1 *Ep.* v. 3. *This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grieveous;* speak soul, what account have you of the Commandments? do you look upon them as an iron chain about your legs, and think yourselves prisoners because you are tied to them? or do you value then as a chain of gold about your neck, and esteem yourselves favourites of the King of Heaven, that he will honour you, to honour him by serving him? so did as great a *Prince* as the world had, *who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly,* 1 Chron. xxix. Not, who am I, that I should be a King over my people? But, that I should have a heart so gracious, to offer willingly with my people? not, who am I, that they should serve me, but that thou wilt honour me with a heart, to serve thee with them? The same holy man in another place speaks of sin, as his prison, and his obedience as his liberty. *I will walk at liberty for I seek thy precepts,* Psal. cxix. 45. when God gives him a large heart for duty, he is as thankful as a man that was bound in prison, when he is set at liberty, that he may visit his friends, and follow his calling. The only grievous thing to a loving soul, is to be hindred in his obedience; this is that which makes such an one out of love with the world, because it cumbers him in his work, and many times keeps him from it. As a conscionable

able faithful servant, that is lame or sickly, and can do his master little service, O! how it grieves him? Thus, the loving soul bemoans itself, that it should put God to so much cost, and be so unprofitable? Speak, is this thy temper? blessed art thou of the Lord. There is a jewel of two diamonds, which this will prove thou art owner of, that the crown jewels, of all the Princes of the world, are not so worthy to be valued with. The jewel, I mean, is made of this pair of graces, faith and love; they are thine, and with them, God and all that he hath. But if the commandments of God be grievous (as they are to every carnal heart) and thou countest thyself at ease, when thou canst make an escape from a duty to commit a sin, as the beast doth when his collar is off, and he in his fat pasture again. Now thou art where thou wouldst be, and can shew some spirits that thou hast; but when conscience puts on the trace again, thou art dull and heavy again. O! it speaks thee to have no love to God, and therefore no faith on God, that is true.

Secondly, The obedience of faith is full of self-denial. Faith keeps the creature low, as in what he hath, so in what he doth. *I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me*, Gal. ii. 20. As if he had said, I pray mistake me not, when I say I live, I mean not that I live by myself, or of myself, but Christ in me. I live, and that deliciously, but it is Christ that keeps the house, not I. I mortify my corruptions, and vanquish temptations, but I am debtor to Christ for the strength. None can write here, as one did under Pope *Adrian*'s statue (where the place of his birth was named, and those Princes that had preferred him from step to step, till he mounted the Pope's chair, but God left out of all the story) *Nihil hic Deus fecit, God did nothing for this man.* No, blessed *Paul*, and in him every believer acknowledgeth God for sole founder and benefactor too of all the good he hath and doth. They are not ashamed to acknowledge who they are beholden to for all. *These are the children which God hath graciously given me,* said Jacob. And, these the services which God hath graciously assisted me in, saith *Paul*, 1 Cor. xv. 10. *I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God, which was with me;* O! how fearful are Saints of writing themselves authors of their own good works? *Art thou able* (said the King to *Daniel*) *to make known unto me the dream which I have seen?* Dan.

ii. 26. Now mark, he doth not say, as the proud Astrologers, chap. ii. 4. *We will shew the interpretations;* that fitted their mouths well enough who had no acquaintance with God, but not *Daniel*'s, the servant of the living God; though at that very time he had the secret revealed to him, and could tell the King his dream, yet he was careful to stand clear from any filching of God's glory from him; and therefore he answers the King, by telling him what his God could do, rather than himself. *There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets,* &c. And what makes *Daniel* so self-denying? Truly, it was, because he had obtained this secret of God, by faith at the throne of grace, as you may perceive by *chap.* ii. *ver.* 15, 16, 17. That faith which taught him to beg the mercy of God, enabled him to deny himself, and give the entire glory of it to God. As rivers empty their streams again into the bosom of the sea, whence they at first received them; so men give the praise of what they do, unto that by which they do it. If they attempt any enterprize with their own wit, or industry, you shall have them bring their sacrifice to their wit or net. No wonder to hear *Nebuchadnezzar* (who looked no higher than himself in building his great *Babylon)* ascribe the honour of it to himself, Dan. 4. 30. *Is not this great Babylon that I have built, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my Majesty?* But faith teacheth the creature to blot out his own name, and write the name of God in its room upon all he hath and doth. When the servants, *Luke* xix 16. came to give up their accounts to their Lord, every one for his pound, those that were faithful to improve it, how humbly and self-denyingly do they speak? *Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds,* saith the first, *ver.* 16. Thy pound hath gained five, saith another, *ver.* 18. Mark, not I have gained, but thy pound hath gained ten and five. They do not applaud themselves, but ascribe both principal and increase to God; thy talent hath gained, that is, thy gifts and grace, through thy assistance and blessing, have gained thus much more. Only, he that did least, comes in with a brag, and tells his Lord what he had done; *Behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin.* Least doers are greatest boasters.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

Two properties of Faith, It is prayerful, and uniform in its acting.

TRUE faith is prayerful; prayer is the child of faith; and as the child bears his father's name upon him, so doth prayer the name of faith; what is it known by, but by *the prayer of faith?* James v. 15. Prayer is the very natural breath of faith; supplication and thanksgiving (the two parts of prayer) by these (as the body by the double motion of the lungs) doth the Christian suck in mercy from God, and breathe back again that mercy in praise to God; but without faith, he could do neither; he could not by supplication draw mercy from God; for *he that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,* Heb. xi. 6. Neither could he return praises to God without faith. *David*'s heart must be fixed before he can sing and give thanks, *Psalm* lvi. Thanksgiving is an act of self-denial, and it is faith alone that will shew us the way out of our own doors; and as the creature cannot pray (I mean acceptably) without faith, so with faith he cannot but pray. The new creature (like infants in their natural birth) comes crying into the world: And, therefore, Christ tells it for great news to *Ananias* of *Saul* (a new born believer) *behold he prays.* But is that so strange, that one brought up at the foot of *Gamaliel,* and so precise a *Pharisee* as he was, should be found upon his knees at prayer? Truly, no: It was that his Sect gloried in, their fasting and praying; and, therefore, he being strict in his way, was (no doubt) acquainted with this work as to the exterior part of it; but he never had the Spirit of prayer, till he now had the Spirit of grace, whereby he believed on Jesus Christ. And, therefore, if you will try your faith, it must not be by bare praying, but by some peculiar characters which faith imprints prayer withal.

Now there are three acts by which faith discovers itself in prayer.

SECT. I.

First, Faith puts forth an exciting act, whereby it provokes the Christian, and strongly presseth him to pray. And this it doth, first, by discovering to the creature its own beggary and want, as also the fulness that is to be had from God in Christ for his supply; both which faith useth as powerful motives to quicken the soul up to pray. As the *Lepers* said to one another, *why sit we here until we die? if we say we will enter into the city, there is famine to slay us; come let us fall into the host of the Syrians,* King vii. 3, 4. Thus faith rouseth the soul up to prayer: If thou stayest at thy own door, O my soul, thou art sure to starve and die; what seest thou in thyself, but hunger and famine? no bread there, no money to buy any in thy own purse: Up, therefore, haste thee to thy God, and thy soul shall live. O! sirs, are you prest with this inward feeling of your own wants? press to the throne of grace as the only way left for your supply; you may hope it is faith that sends you; faith is the principle of our new life. *I live* (saith *Paul*) *by the faith of the Son of God,* Gal. ii. 20. This life being weak, is craving and crying for nourishment, and that naturally as the new born babe doth for the milk; if, therefore, you find this inward sense prompting and provoking you to cry to God, it shews this principle of life is in thee.

Object. But may not an unbeliever pray in the sense of his wants, and be inwardly pinched with them, which may make him pray very feelingly?

Answ, We must distinguish of wants. They are either spiritual or carnal. It cannot be denied but an unbeliever may be very sensible of outward carnal wants, and knock loud at heaven-gate for supply. We find them *howling on their beds, and assembling themselves for corn and wine,* Hosea, vii. 14. There is the cry of the creature, and the cry of the new creature. Every creature hath a natural cry for that which suits their nature. Hence, Psalm civ. 21. *The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God.* But give the lion flesh, and he will not roar for want of grass; give the ox grass, and you shall not hear him lowing for flesh;

flesh; so give the faithless graceless person his fill of his carnal food, sensual enjoyments, and you shall have little complaints of spiritual wants from him. They are, therefore, spiritual wants you must try your faith by; if thou canst heartily pray for love to Christ, faith on him, or any other grace, feeling the want of them as a hungry man doth of his food; thou mayst conclude safely there is this principle of new life, which (like the veins at the bottom of the stomach) by its sucking puts thee to pain till it be heard and satisfied; for these graces being proper to the new creature, can be truly desired of those who are new creatures.

Secondly, Faith excites to prayer from an inward delight it hath in communion with God. *It is good for me* (saith the *Psalmist) to draw near to God*; now mark the next words, *I have put my trust in the Lord*, Psalm lxxiii. 28. We take delight to be often looking, where we have laid up our treasure. This holy man had laid up his soul, and all he had in God by faith, to be kept safely for him; and now he delights oft to be with God, he hath that which invites him into his presence with sweet content. By faith the soul is contracted to Christ. Now being espoused to Christ, there is no wonder at all that it should desire communion with him. And prayer being the place of meeting, where Christ and the soul can come the nearest on this side heaven, therefore the believer is seen so oft walking that way. Canst thou say, poor soul, that this is thy errand, when praying, to see the face of God? can nothing less, and needst thou nothing more to satisfy and recreate thy soul in prayer, than communion with God? certainly God hath thy faith, or else thou couldst not so freely bestow thy love on him, and take delight in him.

SECT. II.

Secondly, Faith puts forth an assisting act in prayer; to instance in two particulars.

First, It assists the soul with importunity; faith is the wrestling grace; it comes up close to God, takes hold of God, and will not easily take a denial. It fires all the affections, and sets them on work; this is the soul's eye by which it sees the filth that is in every sin; and seeing affects the heart,

heart, and puts it into a passion of sorrow, when the soul spreads its abominations before the Lord. The creature now needs no onion to make it weep; tears come freely, as water from a flowing spring. It makes a discovery of Christ to the soul, in the excellencies of his person, love and graces from the glass of the promise; at the sight of which it is even sick with longing after them; and such pangs of love come upon it, as make it send forth strong cries and supplications for that it so impatiently desires; yea, faith doth not barely set the creature's teeth on edge, by displaying the excellency of Christ and his grace; but it supplies him with arguments, and helps the soul to wield them both valiantly and victoriously upon the Almighty. Never could he tell what to do with a promise in prayer till now that faith teacheth him to press God with it, humbly, yet boldly. *What wilt thou do unto thy great Name?* saith believing *Joshua*, chap. vii. 9. as if he had said, thou art so fast bound to thy people, by promise and oath, that thou canst not leave them to perish, but thy Name will suffer with them; faith melts promises into arguments, as the soldier doth lead into bullets; and then helps the Christian to send them with a force to heaven in fervent prayer; whereas a promise in an unbelievers mouth, is like a shot in a gun's mouth without any fire to put to it. O! how cold and dead doth a promise drop from him in prayer? he speaks promises, but cannot pray promises; and, therefore, try thyself, not by naked praying, but by importunity in prayer; and that not by the agitation of thy bodily spirits, but the inward working of thy soul and spirit, whether carried out to plead the promise, and urge it upon God with an humble importunity or not.

Secondly, Faith enables the soul to persevere in the work; false faith may shew some metal at hand, but he will jade at length; *Will the hypocrite pray always?* Job xxvii. 10. No, as the wheel wears with turning, till it breaks at last, so doth the hypocrite; he prays himself weary of praying, something or other will in time make him quarrel with that duty, which he never inwardly liked; whereas the sincere believer hath that in him which makes it impossible he should quite give over praying, except he should also cease believing. Prayer is the very breath of faith; stop a man's breath, and where is he then? It is true, the believer, through his own negligence, may find more difficulty of fetching his praying

praying breath at one time then at another (as a man in a cold doth his natural breath). Alas! who is so careful of his soul's health, that needs not bewail this? but for faith to live, and this breath of prayer to be quite cut off, is impossible. We see *David* did but hold his breath a little longer than ordinary, and what a distemper it put him into, till he gave himself ease again by venting his soul in prayer? *I held my peace, and my sorrow stirred, my heart was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire burned, then spake I with my tongue, Lord make me to know my end*, Psalm xxxix. Dost thou, O man! find thyself under a necessity of praying, as the little babe who cannot chuse, but cry, when it ails or wants any thing, because it hath no other way to hasten its mother or nurse to its help? The Christian's wants, sins, and temptations, continuing to return upon him, he cannot but continue also to pray against them. *From the ends of the earth will I cry unto thee*, saith *David*, Psalm lxi. 2. wherever I am, I will find thee out; prison me, banish me, or do with me what thou wilt, thou shalt never be rid of me, *I will abide in thy Tabernacle for ever*, ver. 4. But how could *David* do that, when banished from it? surely he means by prayer. The praying Christian carries a tabernacle with him; as long as *David* can come at the tabernacle, he will not neglect it; and when he cannot through sickness, banishment, &c. then he will look towards it, and as devoutly worship God in the open fields, as if he were in it. *Let my prayer be set before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as evening sacrifice*, Psalm cxli. 2. He speaks of such a time when he could not come to offer sacrifice at the tabernacle.

SECT. III.

Faith hath a supporting act after prayer. First, It supports the soul to expect a gracious answer; *I will direct my prayers unto thee, and will look up*, Psalm v. 3. or I will look; for what, but for a return? An unbelieving heart shoots at random, and never minds where his arrow lights, or what comes of his praying; but faith fills the soul with expectation. As a merchant when he casts up his estate, he counts what

what he hath sent beyond sea, as well as what he hath in hand; so doth faith reckon upon what he hath sent to heaven in prayer and not received, as well as those mercies which he hath received, and are in hand at present. Now this expectation which faith raiseth in the soul after prayer, appears in the power that it hath to quiet and compose the soul in the interim between the sending forth (as I may say) the ship of prayer, and its return home with its rich lading it goes for; and it is more or less according as faith's strength is; sometimes faith comes from prayer in triumph, and cries *victoria:* It gives such a being and existence to the mercy prayed for in the Christian's soul, before any likelihood of it appears to sense and reason, that the Christian can silence all his troubled thoughts with the expectation of its coming. So *Hannah* prayed, and *was no more sad*, 1 Sam. i. 18. Yea, it will make the Christian disburse his praises for the mercy long before it is received. Thus high faith wrought in *David*, Psalm lvi. 3, 4. *At what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee*; and in the next words, ver. 4. *In God will I praise his Word;* that is, he would praise God for his promise, before there were any performance of it to him, when it had no existence but in God's faithfulness, and *David*'s faith. This holy man had such a piercing eye of faith, as he could see the promise when he was at the lowest ebb of misery, so certain and unquestionable in the power and truth of God, that he could then praise God, as if the promised mercy had been actually fulfilled to him. But I would not have thee, Christian, try the truth of thy faith by this high strain it mounts to in some eminent believers. Thou mayst be a faithful soldier to Christ, though thou attainest not to the degree of a few Worthies in his Army, more honourable in this respect, than the rest of their brethren. There is a lower act of faith, which, if thou canst find, may certify thee of its truth; that (I mean) which, though it doth not presently disburthen the soul (upon praying) of all its anxious disquieting thoughts, yet keeps the soul's head above the waves, and gives a check to them that they abate (though by little and little), as the stream in a channel doth at a falling tide. When God took the *Deluge* from the earth, he did not do it in a moment. It is said *the waters returned from off the earth continually*, Gen. viii. 3. That is, it was falling water from day to day, till all was gone: Canst thou not find, Christian, that some of

of thy tumultuous disquieting thoughts are let out at the sluice of prayer, and that it is some ease to thy encumbered spirit, that thou hast the bosom of a gracious God to empty thy sorrowful heart into? and though praying doth not drain away all thy fears, yet it keeps thee from being over-flown with them, which thou couldst not avoid without faith? a soul wholly void of faith, prays, and leaves none of its burthen with God, but carries all back with it that it brought, and more too; calling on God gives no more relief to him, than throwing out an anchor that hath no hooks to take hold on the firm earth, doth the sinking ship. If, therefore, poor soul, thou findest upon throwing out thy anchor of faith in prayer, that it takes such hold on Christ in the promise, as to stay thee from being driven by the fury of Satan's affrighting temptations, or thy own despairing thoughts, bless God for it. The ship that rides at anchor is safe (though it may be a little tossed too and fro) so long as the anchor keeps its hold. And so art thou poor soul; that faith will save from hell, that will not wholly free the soul here from fears.

SECT. IV.

True faith is uniform. As sincere obedience doth not pick and chuse, take this commandment, and leave that; but hath respect to all the precepts of God; so faith unfeigned, hath respect to all the truths of God. It believes one promise as well as another. As the true Christian must not *have the faith of our Lord Jesus with respect of persons*, James ii. 1. so not *with respect to truths*. To pretend to believe one promise, and to give no credit to another; this is to be partial in the promises, as the Priests are charged to be in the duties of the law, *Mal.* ii. 9. The honour of God is as deeply engaged to perform one promise as another. Indeed, as the breach but of one commandment puts us under the guilt of the whole; so God's failing in one promise (which is blasphemy to think), would be the breaking of his whole Covenant. Promises are copulative as well as commands; and therefore neither can God keep one, except he perform all; nor we believe one, except we believe all. God hath spoke all these words of promises, as he did of those precepts; his seal is to all, and he looks we should compass all within the embraces of our faith. *David* bears wit-

ness to the whole truth of God, Psalm cxix. 160. *Thy Word is true from the beginning, and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.* Try now thy faith here; possibly thou pretendest to believe the promise for pardon, and art often pleasing thyself with the thoughts of it; but what faith hast thou on the promise for sanctifying thy nature, and subduing thy corruptions? may be thou mindest not these, improvest not these; this fruit may hang long enough on the branches of the promises before thou gatherest it; the other is for thy tooth, not these; whereas true faith would like one as well as the other. See how heartily *David* prays for the performance of this promise, Psalm cxix. 132. *Be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name; order my steps in thy word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me.* *David* would not lose any privilege that God hath by promise settled on his children; do with me, saith he, *as thou usest to do.* This is no more than family fare, what thou promisest to do for all that love thee; and let not me go worse clad than the rest of my brethren. May be thou fancied, thou hast a faith for the eternal salvation of thy soul; but hast thou faith to rely on God for the things of this life? A strange believer is he not, that lives by faith for heaven, and by his wits and sinful policy for the world? Christ proves that they, *John* v. 44. did not believe on him, because they durst not trust him with their names and credits. If we cannot trust him with the less, how can we in the greater?

I deny not, but he that hath a true faith, yea, a strong faith for heaven, may be put to a plunge, and his faith foiled about a temporal promise; but we must not, from an hour of temptation (wherein God leaves the most eminent Saints to humble them), judge of the constant ordinary frame of the believer's heart. Though *Abraham* dissembled once to save his life, which he thought in some danger for his wife's beauty, yet he did at other times give eminent testimony that he trusted God for his temporal life, as well as for his eternal salvation. I do not, therefore, bid thee question the truth of thy faith, for every fainting fit that comes over it, as to the good things of the promise for this life. A man may, in a time of war, have some of his estate lie under the enemies power, and he so long have no profits from it; but still he reckons it as his estate, is troubled for his present great loss,

loss, and endeavours, as soon as he can, to recover it again out of his enemies' hand; so in the hurry of a temptation, when Satan, the soul's great enemy, is abroad, and God withdraws his assistance, the believer may have little support from some particular promise; but the believer ever counts that his portion, as well as any other, mourns he can act his faith no more upon it, and labours to reinforce his faith with new strength from heaven, that he may be able to live upon it, and improve it more to his comfort, so that still it holds true, if we believe not God for this life, neither do we for the other. In a word, may be thou pretendest to a faith for thy temporals, and seemest to trust God for things of this life; but art mere strangers to those prime acts of faith, whereby the believing soul closeth with Christ, and receiveth him as his Lord and Saviour, and so seals to the covenant, that in the gospel is held forth to poor sinners. Canst thou so far fight against thy own reason, as to think that any temporal promise belongs to thee without these? What gives the woman right to her jointure, but her marriage-covenant? And what gives the creature a true claim to these promises, or any other in the covenant of grace, but its union to Christ? The first act of God's love to the creature, is that whereby he chuseth such an one to be his, and sets him apart in his unchangeable purpose, to be an object of his special love in Christ, and therefore called the foundation, as that on which God lays the superstructure of all other mercies. *The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his,* 2 Tim. ii. 19.

First, God chuseth a person to be his, and on this foundation he builds, and bestows all his further cost of mercy. So the creature first, by faith, closeth with Christ, severs him in his thoughts from all others, and chuseth him to be his Saviour, in whom alone he will trust, and alone serve; then it trades with this promise and that, as the portion which falls to him by marriage with Christ. And therefore see how preposterous thy course is, who snatchest these promises to thyself, before there hath past any good-will from thee to Christ.

CHAP. VII.

An Exhortation to all in a state of unbelief, to endeavour for Faith, with a direction to the attaining of it.

Is faith so precious a grace? Let it provoke you, who want it. Can you hear of this pearl, and not wish it were yours? Wherefore hath the Spirit spoken such great and glorious things of faith, but to make it the more desirable? Is there any way to have Christ, but by faith? or dost not thou think that thou needest Christ as much as any other? There is a generation of men in the world, would almost make one think this was their judgment; who, because their corruptions have not broke out into plague-sores of profaneness, left such a brand of ignominy upon their name, as some others; but their conversations have been strewed with some flowers of morality, whereby their names have kept sweet among their neighbours; therefore they do not at all listen to Christ, neither do their consciences much check them for this neglect. And why so? surely it is not because they are more willing to go to hell than others, for they do that to escape it, which many others will not; but because they think the way they are in will bring them to heaven without any more ado. Poor deluded creatures! Is Christ then sent to help only some more debauched sinners to heaven, such as drunkards, swearers, and of that rank? And are civil, moral men left to walk thither on their own legs? The word tells but of one way to heaven for all that mean to come there. As there is but *one God*, so but *one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus*, 1 Tim. ii. 5. And if but one bridge over the gulf, judge what is like to become of the civil righteous man (for all his sweet sented life) if he miss this one, and goes on in the road he hath set out in for heaven? O! remember proud man who thou art, and cease thy vain attempt. Art not thou of *Adam*'s seed? Hast not thou traitors blood in thy veins? If *every mouth*

mouth be stopped, Rom. iii. 19, 20. how darest thou open thine? If *all the world become guilty before God, that by the deeds of the law, no flesh can be justified in his sight;* where then shalt thou stand to plead thy innocency before him, who sees thy black skin under thy white feathers, thy foul heart through thy fair carriage? It is faith on Christ that alone can purify thy heart, without which thy washed face and hands (external righteousness I mean) will never commend thee to God; and, therefore, thou art under a horrible delusion if thou dost not think that thou needest Christ, and faith in him, as much as the bloodiest murderer, or filthiest Sodomite in the world. If a company of men and children in a journey, were to wade through some brook, not beyond a man's depth, the men would have the advantage; but if to cross the sea, the men would need a ship to waft them over, as well as the children; and they might well pass for mad men, if they should think to wade through without such ship, that is offered them as well as the other; such a foolish desperate adventure wouldst thou give for thy soul, if thou shouldst think to make thy way through the justice of God to heaven, without shipping thyself by faith in Christ, because thou art not so bad in thy external conversation as others. Let me therefore again and again beseech all that are yet destitute of faith, to endeavour for it speedily. *David resolved not to give sleep to his eyes, nor slumber to his eye-lids, till he found out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of* Jacob, Psalm cxxxii. 4, 5. The habitation which pleaseth God most, is a believing heart, Ephes. iii. 17. *that Christ may dwell in your heart by faith.* O! how dare you sleep a night in that house where God doth not dwell? and he dwells not in thee, if thou carriest an unbelieving heart in thy bosom. There is never a gospel sermon thou hearest, but he stands at thy door to be let in, take heed of multiplying unkindnesses, in denying him entertainment; how knowest thou, but God may, finding thy heart so oft shut by unbelief against his knocks, suddenly seal thee up under final unbelief?

But possibly thou wilt ask now, how thou mayest get this precious grace of faith?

SECT.

SECT. I.

First, Labour to get thy heart convinced of, and affected with thy unbelief: Till this be done, thou wilt be sluggish in thy endeavours for faith. A man may be convinced of other sins, and never think of coming to Christ. Convince a drunkard of his drunkenness, and upon leaving his drunken trade, his mind is pacified; yea, he blesseth himself in his reformation, because all the quarrel his conscience had with him was for that particular sin: But, when the Spirit of God convinceth the creature of his unbelief, he gets between him and those burrows in which he used to earth and hide himself; he hath no ease in his spirit from those plaisters now, which formerly have relieved him, and so kept him from coming to Christ. Before, it served the turn to bring his conscience to sleep, when it accused him for such a sin; that he had left the practice of it; and, for the neglect of a duty, that now he had taken it up, without any enquiry into his state, whether pardoned or unpardoned (thus many make a shift to daub and patch the peace of their consciences, even as some do to keep up an old rotten house, by stopping in here a tile, and there a stone, till a loud wind comes and blows the whole house down). But when once the creature hath the load of its unbelief laid upon his spirit, then it is little ease to him, to think he is no drunkard as he was, no Atheist in his family, without the worship of God. Thy present state, saith the Spirit of God, is as damning, in that thou art an unbeliever, as if thou wert these still; yea, what thou wert, thou art, and wilt be found at the great day, to be the drunkard and Atheist (for all thy seeming reformation) except by an intervening faith, thou gainest a new name; what, though thou art drunk no more, yet the guilt remains upon thee, till faith strikes it off with the blood of Christ. God will be paid his debt by thee, or Christ for thee; and Christ pays no reckoning for unbelievers.

Again, as the guilt remains, so the power of those lusts remains (so long as thou art an unbeliever), however they may disappear in the outward act. Thy heart is not emptied of one sin, until the vent is stopt by restraining grace. A bot-

A bottle full of wine, close stopt, shews no more what thath in it. than one that is empty; and that is thy case. How is it possible thou shouldst truly mortify any one lust, that hath no faith, which is the only victory of the world? In a word, if under the convincement of thy unbelief, thou wilt find (how little a sin soever now it is thought by thee) that there is more malignity in it, than in all thy other sins. Hast thou been a liar? that is a grievous sin indeed; hell gapes for every one that loveth and telleth a lie, *Rev.* xxii. 15. But know, poor wretch, the loudest lie, is that which by thy unbelief thou tellest; here thou bearest false-witness against God himself, and tellest a lye, not to the Holy Ghost, as *Ananias* did, but a lye of the Holy Ghost; as if not a word were true, he saith, in the promises of the gospel. If he that believes sets to his seal that God is true, judge you whether the unbeliever makes him not a lyar? Hast thou been a murderer, yea, had thy hand in the blood of Saints? This is a dreadful sin, I confess; but by thy unbelief, thou art a more bloody murderer, by how much the blood of God is more precious than the blood of mere men. Thou killest Christ over again by thy unbelief, and treads his blood under thy feet, yea, throwest it under Satan's feet to be trampled on by him.

SECT. II.

Quest. But how can unbelief be so great a sin, when it is not in the sinners powers to believe?

Answ. By this reason, the unregenerate person might wipe off any other sin, and shake off the guilt of it, with but saying, It is not my fault that I do not keep this commandment or that, for I have no power of myself to do them. This is true, he cannot perform one holy action holily and acceptably; *They that are in the flesh cannot please God*, Rom. viii. 8. But it is a false inference, that therefore he doth not sin, because he can do no other.

First, Because this inability is not created by God, but contracted by the creature himself. *God made man upright, but they sought out many inventions*, Eccles. vii. 29. Man had not his lame hand from God. No, he was made a creature fit and able for any service his Maker would please to employ

ploy him in; but man crippled himself; and man's fault cannot prejudice God's right. Though he hath lost his ability to obey, yet God hath not lost his power to command; who among ourselves thinks his debtor discharged, by wasting that estate, whereby he was able to have paid us? It is confest, had man stood, he should not, indeed could not, have believed on Christ for salvation, as now he is held forth in the gospel; but this was not from any disability in man, but from the unmeetness of such an object to *Adam*'s holy state. If it had been a duty meet for God to command, there was ability in man to have obeyed.

Secondly, Man's present impotency to yield obedience to the commands of God, and in particular to this of believing (where it is promulged) doth afford him no excuse; because it is not a simple inability, but complicated with an inward enmity against the command. It is true, man cannot believe; but it is as true, man will not believe: *Ye will not come unto me, that you might have life,* John v. 40. Is it possible, yea, ordinary, that a man may (through some feebleness and deficiency of strength) be disabled to do that which he is very willing to do, and this draws out our pity; such an one was the *poor cripple,* who lay so long at *the pool,* John v. 5. He was willing enough to have stept down, if he could have but crept thither, or that any other should have helped him in: But what would you think of such a cripple, that can neither go himself to the pool for healing, nor willing any should help him, but flies in the face of him that would do him this friendly office? every unbeliever is this cripple: He is not only impotent himself, but a resister of the Holy Ghost, that comes to woo and draw him unto Christ. Indeed, every one that believes, believes willingly. But he is beholden, not to nature, but to grace for this willingness; none are willing till the day of power comes, *Psalm* cx. 3. in which the Spirit of God overshadows the soul, and by his incubation (as once upon the waters) he new forms and moulds the will into a sweet compliance with the call of God in the gospel.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Contains a second Direction for the obtaining Faith.

TAKE heed of resisting or opposing the Spirit of God, when he offers his help to the work. If ever thou believest, he must enable thee; take heed of opposing him. Master workmen love not to be controlled. Now, two ways the Spirit of God may be opposed.

First, Take heed thou opposest not the Spirit, by not attending on him in the way and means by which he ordinarily works faith. Thou knowest where Jesus useth to pass, and his Spirit breathe; and that is in the great gospel ordinance, the ministry of the word. Christ's sheep ordinarily conceive when they are drinking the water of life here. The hearing of the gospel is called, Gal. iii. 2. *The hearing of faith,* because by hearing the doctrine of faith, the Spirit works the grace of faith in them. This is the still voice he speaks to the souls of sinners. *Thine eyes shall see thy teachers, and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, this is the way, walk ye in it,* Isaiah xxx. 20. here are God and man teaching together. Thou canst not neglect man's teaching, but thou resistest the Spirit's also. It was for something that the Apostle placed them so near, 2 *Thes.* v. 19. he bids us, *quench not the Spirit;* and in the next words, *despise not prophecying;* surely he would have us know, that the Spirit is dangerously quenched, when prophecying or preaching of the Gospel is despised. Now the most notorious way of despising prophecying, or preaching, is to turn our back off the ordinance, and not attend on it. When God sets up the ministry of the word in a place, his Spirit then opens his school, and expects, that all who would be taught for heaven should come thither. O! take heed of playing the truant, and absenting thyself from the ordinance, upon any unnecessary occasion, much less of casting off the ordinance. He tempts God, that would be kept from sin, and yet will not keep out of the circle of the occasion,

that leads to the sin; he tempts God as much, that would have faith, and pretends his desire is, that the Spirit should work it, but will not come within the ordinary walk of the Spirit, where he doth the work: Whether is it most fitting, that the scholar should wait on his master at school to be taught, or that the master should run after his truant scholar at play to teach him.

Secondly, Take heed, that in thy attendance on the word thou dost not control the Spirit in those several steps he takes in thy soul, in order to the production of faith. Though there are no preparatory works of our own to grace, yet the holy Spirit hath his preparatory works, whereby he disposeth souls to grace. Observe, therefore, carefully the gradual approaches he makes by the word to thy soul, for want of complying with, he may withdraw in distaste, and leave the work at a sad stand for a time, if not quite give it over, never more to return. We read, Acts vii. 23. *how it came into the heart of* Moses *to visit his brethren in Egypt* (stirred up by God himself); there he begins to shew his good will and zeal for them, in slaying an *Egyptian* that had wronged an *Israelite;* which, though no great matter towards their full deliverance, yet *he supposed* (ver. 25.) *his brethren would have understood* (by that hint) *how that God would, by his hand, deliver them;* but they did not comply with him, nay, rather opposed him; and therefore he withdrew, and they hear no more of *Moses* or their deliverance *for forty years*, ver. 40. Thus, may be the Spirit of God gives thee a visit in an ordinance, directs a word that speaks to thy particular condition; he would have thee understand by this, sinner, how ready he is to help thee out of thy house of bondage, thy state of sin and wrath, if now thou wilt hearken to his counsel and kindly entertain his motions. Carry thyself rebelliously now against him, and God knows when thou mayst hear of him again knocking at thy door upon such an errand. God makes short work with some in his judiciary proceedings; if he finds a repulse once, sometimes he departs, and leaves a dismal curse behind him as its punishment, Luke xiv. 24. *I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden, shall taste of my supper.* They were but once invited, and for their first denial this curse clapt upon their heads. It is not said they shall never come where the supper stands on the board, but they shall never

never taste. Many sit under the ordinances, where Christ in gospel-dishes is set forth admirably, but through the efficacy of this curse upon them, never taste of these dainties all their life; they hear precious truths, but their hearts are sealed up in unbelief, and their minds made reprobate and injudicious, that they are not moved at all by them. There is a kind of madness, in which a man will discourse soberly and rationally, till you come to speak of some particular subject that was the occasion of his distemper; here he is quite out, and presently loses his reason, not able to speak with any understanding of it. O! how many men and women are there among us (frequent attenders on the word), who, in any matter of the world, are able to discourse very understandingly and rationally; but when you come to speak of the things of God, Christ and heaven, it is strange to see how soon their reason is lost, and all understanding gone from them; they are not able to speak of these matters with any judgment! Truly I am afraid, in many (who have set long under the means, and the Spirit hath been making some attempts on them), this injudiciousness of mind in the things of God, is but the consequence of that spiritual curse which God hath past upon them, for resisting these essays of his Spirit. I beseech you, therefore, beware of opposing the Spirit; doth he beam any light from his word into thy understanding, whereby thou (who wert before an ignorant sot) comest to know something of the evil of sin, the excellency of Christ, and canst discourse rationally of the truths of the Scripture? Look now to it, what thou doest with this candle of the Lord, that is lighted in thy mind; take heed thou art not found sinning with it, or priding thyself in it, lest it goes out in a snuff, and thou, for *rebelling against the light*, comest at last *to die without knowledge*, as is threatened, *Job* xxxvi. 12. If the Spirit of God goes further, and fortifies the light in thy understanding, that it sets thy conscience on fire with the sense of thy sins, and apprehensions of the wrath due to them. Now, take heed of resisting the holy Spirit, that, in mercy to thy soul, kindles this fire in thy bosom, to keep thee out of a worse in hell. Thou must expect, that Satan, now his house is on fire over his head, will bestir him what he can, to quench it; thy danger is, lest thou shouldst listen to him for thy present ease. Take heed, therefore, where thou drawest thy water,

with which thou quenchest this fire; that it be out of no well, but the word of God. In thinking to quiet thy conscience, thou mayest quench the Spirit of God; which is the mischief, the Devil longs, thou shouldst pull upon thy own head. There is more hope of a sick man, when his disease comes out, than when it lies at the heart, and nothing is seen outwardly; you know how *Hazael* helped his *Master* to his sad end, who might have lived for all his disease, 2 Kings viii. 15. *He took a thick cloth, and dipt it in water, and spread it on his face, so that he died;* and it follows, *And Hazael reigned in his stead.* Thus the wretch came to the crown. He saw the King like to recover, and he squatted his disease (in all probability) to his heart by the wet cloth, and so by his death made a way for himself to the throne. And truly Satan will not much fear to recover the throne of thy heart (which this present combustion in thy conscience puts him in great fear of losing), can he but persuade thee to apply some carnal coolings to it, thereby to quench the Spirit in his convincing work. These convictions are sent thee mercifully, in order to thy spiritual delivery, and they should be as welcome to thee, as the kindly bearing pains of a woman in travail are to her; without them she could not be delivered of her child; nor without these, more or less, can the new creature be brought forth in thy soul.

Again, May be the Spirit of God goes yet further, and doth not only dart light into thy mind, hell fire into thy conscience, but heaven fire also into thy affections; my meaning is, He from the word displays Christ so in his own excellencies, and the fitness of him in all his offices to thy wants, that thy affections begin to work after him; the frequent discourses of him, and the mercy of God through him to poor sinners, are so luscious, that thou beginnest to taste some sweetness in hearing of them, which stirs up some passionate desires, whereby thou art in hearing the word often sallying forth in such like breathing as these. O! that Christ were mine, shall I ever be the happy soul whom God will pardon and save? yea, possibly in the heat of thy affections, thou art cursing thy lusts, and Satan, who has held thee so long from Christ, and sudden purposes are taken up by thee, that thou wilt bid adieu to thy former ways, and break through all the entreaties of thy dearest lusts, to come to Christ. O soul! now the kingdom of God is nigh indeed

unto

unto thee. Thou art (as I may say) even upon thy quickening; and therefore, above all, beware lest thou miscarry; if these sudden desires did but ripen into a deliberate choice of Christ, and these purposes settle into a permanent resolution to renounce sin and self, and so thou cast thyself on Christ, I durst be the messenger to joy thee with the birth of this babe of grace (faith I mean) in thy soul. I confess affections are up and down; yea, like the wind, how strongly soever they seem to blow the soul one way at present, are often found in the quite contrary point soon after. A man may be drunk with passion and affection, as really as with wine or beer. And, as it is ordinary for a man to make a bargain, when he is in beer or wine, which he repents of as soon as he is sober, so it is as ordinary for poor creatures, who make choice of Christ and his ways in a sermon (while their affections have been elevated above their ordinary pitch by some moving discourse) to repent of all they have done a while after, when the impression of the word (which heated their affections in hearing) be worn off, and then they come to themselves again, and are what they were, as far from any such desires after Christ as ever. Content not, therefore, thyself with some sudden pangs of affection in an ordinance, but labour to preserve those impressions which then the Spirit makes on thy soul, that they be not defaced, and rubed off (like colours newly laid on before they are dry), by the next temptation that comes. This is the caveat of the Apostle, Heb. ii. 1. *Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.* May be at present, thy heart is melting for thy sins, and thou thinkest, surely now I shall never give my lust a kind look more (indeed one might wonder to see the solemn mournful countenances under a sermon, which of these could be the man, or woman, that would afterwards be seen walking hand in hand with those sins they now weep to hear mentioned. But, as thou lovest thy life, watch thy soul, least this prove but as the early dew, none of which is to be seen at noon. Do thou, therefore, as those do, who have stood some while in a hot bath, out of which when they come, they do not presently go into the open air, but betake themselves to a warm bed, that they may nourish this kindly heat, while their pores are open, by a gentle sweat, breathe out more effectually the remaining dregs

dregs of their distemper. Thus betake thyself to thy closet, and there labour to take the advantage of thy present relenting frame, for the more free pouring out of thy soul to God, now the ordinance hath thawed the tap, and with all thy soul beg of God, he would not leave thee short of faith, and suffer thee to miscarry, now he hath thee upon the wheel, but make thee a vessel unto honour.

CHAP. IX.

Contains three Directions more towards the obtaining Faith.

LIFT up thy cries aloud in prayer to God for faith.

SECT. I.

Quest. But may an unbeliever pray? some think he ought not.

Answ. This is ill news, if it were true, even for some who do believe, but dare not say that they are believers. It were enough to scare them from prayer too; and so, it would be as Satan would have it, that God should have few or none to vouch him in this solemn part of his worship; for they are but the fewest of believers that can walk to the throne of grace in view of their own faith. Prayer is *medium cultus*, and also *medium gratiæ*. A means whereby we give worship to God, and also wait to receive grace from God; so that to say a wicked man ought not to pray, is to say, he ought not to worship God, and acknowledge him to be his Maker: And also, that he ought not to wait on the means whereby he may obtain grace and faith. Prayer is the souls motion God-ward (saith Rev. Master Baxter);

Baxter); and to say an unbeliever should not pray, is to say he should not turn to God; who yet saith to the wicked, seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near. Desire is the soul of prayer, and who dares say to the wicked, Desire not faith, desire not Christ or God? In his right method for peace of conscience, page 63. It cannot, indeed, be denied, but that an unbeliever sins when he prays; but it is not his praying is his sin, but his praying unbelievingly. And therefore he sins less in praying than in neglecting to pray; because, when he prays, his sin lies but in the circumstance and manner; but when he doth not pray, then he stands in a total defiance to the duty God hath commanded him to perform, and means God hath appointed him to use. I must, therefore, poor soul, bid thee go on, and neglect not this grand duty, which lies upon all the sons and daughters of men; only go in the sense of thy own vileness, and take heed of carrying purposes of going on in sin with thee to the throne of grace; this were a horrible wickedness indeed. As if a traitor should put on the livery which the Princes' servants wear, for no other end but to gain more easy access to his person, that he might stab him with a dagger he hath under that cloak. Is it not enough to sin, but wouldst thou make God accessary to his own dishonour also? By this bold enterprize, thou dost what lies in thee to do it. Should this be thy temper (which, God forbid), if I send thee to pray, it must be with *Peter*'s counsel to *Simon Magus*, Acts viii. 22. *Repent of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.* But I suppose thee (to whom now I am directing my advice) to be of a far different complexion, one brought to some sense of thy deplored state, and so softened by the word, that thou couldst be content to have Christ upon any terms; only thou art at a loss in thy own thoughts, how such an impotent creature, yea, impudent sinner as thou hast been, should ever come to believe on him. So that it is not the love of any present sin in thy heart, but the fear of thy past sins in thy conscience that keeps thee from believing. Now for thee it is, that I would gather the best encouragements I can out of the word, and, with them, strew thy way to the throne of grace. Go, poor soul, to prayer for faith; I do not fear a chiding for sending such customers

customers to God's door. He that sends us to call sinners home unto him, cannot be angry to hear thee call upon him. He is not so thronged with such suitors, that he can find in his heart to send them away with a denial, that come with this request in their mouths. Christ complains, that sinners will not come unto him, that they may have life; and do you think he will let any complain of him that desire to come? Chear up thy heart poor creature, and knock boldly; thou hast a friend in God's own bosom, that will procure thy welcome. He that could, without any prayer made to him, give Christ for thee, will not be unwilling, now thou so earnestly prayest, to give faith unto thee. What thou prayest God to give, he commands thee to do. *This is his Commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ,* 1 John iii. 23. so that in praying for faith, thou prayest that his will may be done by thee; yea, that part of his will, which above all he desires should be done; called, therefore, with an emphasis, *The Work of God,* John vi. 29. *This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.* As if Christ had said, If ye do not this, ye do nothing for God: And surely Christ knew his Father's mind best. O! how welcome must that prayer be to God, which falls in with his chiefest design. *Joab* found his request in the mouth of the woman of *Teckoa,* to take as he would have it; how could it do otherwise, when he asked nothing but what the King liked better than himself? And doth it not please God more (how strong soever thy desires for faith are) that a poor humbled sinner should believe, than it can the creature himself? Methinks by this time, thou shouldst begin to promise thyself (poor soul, a happy return of this thy adventure, which thou hast now sent to heaven. But for thy further encouragement know, that this grace which thou so wantest and makest thy moan to God for, is a principal part of Christ's purchase. That blood, which is the price of pardon, is the price of faith, by which poor sinners may come to have the benefit of that pardon. As he hath bought off that wrath, which man's sin had justly kindled in God's heart against him, so he hath that enmity which the heart of the creature is filled with against God, and paid for a new stock of grace, wherewith his bankrupt creature may again set up; so that, poor soul, when thou goest to pray for faith, look up unto Christ,

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as having a bank of grace lying by him, to give out to poor sinners, who see they have nothing of their own to begin with, and in the sense of this their beggary, repair to him. *Thou hast ascended on high, led captivity captive, received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them,* Psalm lxviii 18. This is meant of Christ, and to him applied, *Eph.* iv. 8. Now observe,

First, A bank and treasure of gifts in the hand of Christ, *Thou hast.*

Secondly, Who entrusts him with them, and that is his Father, *Thou hast received gifts;* that is, Christ of his Father.

Thirdly, When, or upon what consideration, doth the Father deposit this treasure into Christ's hands? *Thou hast ascended on high, led captivity captive, received,* &c. that is, when Christ had vanquished sin and Satan by his death, and rode in the triumphant chariot of his ascension into heaven, then did Christ receive these gifts, as the purchase of his blood, and the payment of an old debt, which God, before the foundation of the world (when the covenant was transacted and struck), promised his Son, upon the condition of his discharging sinful man's debt, with the effusion of his own precious blood unto death.

Fourthly, The persons for whose use Christ received these gifts; *for men,* not Angels, for *rebellious* men, not men without sin; so that, poor soul, thy sinful nature and life do not make thee exempt and shut out from receiving any of this boon.

Lastly, Observe the nature of these gifts, and the end they are given Christ for; *that God may dwell in them or with them;* now nothing but faith can make a soul (that hath been rebellious) a place meet for the holy God to dwell in.

This is the gift indeed he received all other gifts for, wherefore the gifts of the Spirit and Ministry, *Apostles, Teachers, Pastors,* &c. that by these he might work faith in the hearts of poor sinners? Let this give thee boldness, poor soul, humbly to press God for that which Christ hath paid for; say, Lord, I have been a rebellious wretch indeed, but did Christ receive nothing for such? I have an unbelieving heart, but I hear there is faith paid for, Christ shed his blood, that thou mightst shed forth thy spirit on

poor sinners. Dost thou think, that while thou art thus pleading with God, and using Christ's name in prayer, that Christ himself can sit within hearing of all this, and not befriend thy motion to his Father? Surely he is willing, that what God is indebted to him, should be paid; and, therefore, when thou beggest faith upon the account of his death, thou shalt find him ready to join issue with thee in the same prayer to his Father. Indeed he went to heaven on purpose, that poor returning souls might not want a friend at court, when they come with their humble petitions.

SECT. II.

Fourthly, Converse much with the promises, and be frequently pondering them in thy thoughts. It is indeed the Spirits work, and only his, to bottom thy soul upon the promise, and give his word a being by faith in thy heart; this thou canst not do; yet as fire came down from heaven upon *Elijah*'s sacrifice, when he had laid the wood in order, and gone as far as he could; so thou mayst comfortably hope that then the Spirit of God will come with spiritual light and life, to quicken the promise upon thy heart, when thou hast been consciously diligent in meditating on the promise; if thou ownest God in the thing, as he did, who, when he had laid all in order, lifts up his heart to God in prayer, expecting all from him, 1 *Kings* xviii, 36. no speedier way to invite the Spirit of God to our assistance than this. As he tempts the Devil to tempt him that lets his eyes gaze, or his thoughts gad upon a lustful object; so he bespeaks the holy Spirits company, that lets out his thoughts upon holy heavenly objects. We need not doubt but the Spirit of God is as willing to cherish any good motion, as the infernal spirit is to nourish that which is evil. We find the Spouse sitting under the shadow of her beloved, as one under an apple-tree, *Cant.* ii. 3. and presently she tells us, *his fruit was sweet to her taste,* What doth this her sitting under his shadow better signify than a soul sitting under the thoughts of Christ, and the precious promises that grow out of him, as branches out of a tree? Do but (O Christian) place thyself here awhile, and it were strange if the Spirit should not shake some fruit from one branch

branch or another into thy lap. Thou knowest not, but as *Isaac* met his bride when he went into the fields to meditate, so thou mayst meet thy beloved, while walking by meditation in this garden of the promises.

SECT. III.

Lastly, Press and urge thy soul home with that strong obligation that lies upon thee, a poor humbled sinner, to believe possibly God hath shamed thee in the sight of thy own conscience for other sins, that thou loathest the very thought of them, and durst as well run thy head into the fire, as allow thyself in them; if thou shouldst wrong thy neighbour in his person, name, or estate, it would kindle a fire in thy conscience, and make thee afraid. Converse with thy own thoughts till thou hadst repented of it; and is faith the only indifferent thing, whether thou wilt be so good to thyself as to believe or no? Truly the tenderness of conscience, which many humbled sinners express in trembling at, and smiting them for other sins, compared with the little sense they express for this of unbelief, speaks as if they thought they offended God in them, and only wronged themselves by this. O! how greatly art thou deceived in thy own thoughts, if these be thy apprehensions? yea, if thou dost not think thou dishonourest God, and offendest him in a more transcendent manner by thy unbelief, than by all thy other sins. What *Bernard* saith of a hard heart, I may say of an unbelieving heart: That is a hard heart indeed (saith he), that trembles not at the name of a hard heart; and that an unbelieving heart indeed, that trembles not at the name of an unbelieving heart. Call thyself, O man, to the bar, and hear what thy soul hath to say for its not closing with Christ, and thou shalt then see what an unreasonable reason it will give. It must be either because thou likest not the terms, or else because thou fearest they are too good ever to be performed. Is the first of these thy reason, because thou likest not the terms? Possibly thou mightest have had Christ and thy lusts with him, thou wouldst have been better pleased; but to part with thy lusts to gain Christ, this thou thinkest, saying, It is strange this

should offend thee, which God could not have left out, and truly have loved us. Thou art a sot, a devil, if thou dost not think thy sins the worst piece of thy misery. O! what is Christ worth in thy thoughts, if thou darest not trust him to recompense the loss of a base lust? That man values gold little, who thinks he shall pay too dear for it by throwing the dirt or dung out of his hands to receive it. Well, sinner, the terms for having Christ content thee not; ask then thy soul how the terms on which thou holdst thy lusts content thee; canst thou better spare the blissful presence of God and Christ in hell, where thy lusts are sure to leave thee at last, than the company of thy lusts in heaven, where faith in Christ would certainly bring thee: But, I think, if thou wouldst be so faithful to thyself, as to state the case right, and then seriously acquaint thy soul with it, that thou wouldst soon come to have better thoughts of Christ, and worse of thy sins. But may be this is not the reason that keeps thee from believing; the terms thou likest highly, but it cannot enter into thy heart to think that ever such great things as are promised, should be performed to such an one as thou art. Well, of the two, it is better the rub in thy way to Christ should lie in the difficulty, that thy understanding finds to conceive, than in the obstinacy of thy will not to receive what God in Christ offers; but this must be removed also; therefore fall to work with thy soul, and labour to bring it to reason in this particular; for indeed nothing can be more irrational, than to object against the reality and certainty of God's promises. Two things well wrought on thy soul, would satisfy thy doubts, and scatter thy fears as to this.

First, Labour to get a right notion of God in thy understanding, and it will not appear strange at all that a great God should do so great things for poor sinners; if a beggar should promise you a thousand pounds a year, you might indeed slight it, and ask where he should have it? But if a prince should promise more, you would listen after it, because he hath an estate that bears proportion to his promise. God is not engaged for more by promise, than infinite mercy, power and faithfulness can discharge. *Be still, and know that I am God,* Psalm xlvi. 10. On this Psalm, *Luther* would say, in times of great confusion in the Church, *Let us sing the six-and-fortieth Psalm, in spite of the Devil and*

and all his instruments And this clause of it, poor humbled soul, thou mayst sing with comfort in spite of Satan and sin also. Be still, O my soul, and know, that he who offers thee mercy, is God; they that know his name, will trust in him.

Secondly, Peruse well the securities which this great God gives for the performance of his promise to the believer, and thou shalt find them so many and great, that if we had the most slippery cheating companion in the world under such bonds for the paying a sum of money, we should think it sure enough; and wilt thou not rest satisfied, when the true and faithful God puts himself under these for thy security, whose truth is so immutable, that it is more possible for light to send forth darkness, than it is that a lie should come out of his blessed lips?

CHAP. X.

An Exhortation to Believers, above all to look to their Faith, with some Directions for the preserving it.

I NOW turn myself to you that are believers, in a double Exhortation.

First, Seeing faith is such a choice grace, be stirred up to a more than ordinary care to preserve it. Keep that, and it will keep thee and all thy other graces. Thou standest by faith; if that fails, thou fallest; where shall we find thee then but under thy enemies feet? Be sensible of any danger thy faith is in; like that *Grecian Captain,* who being knocked down in fight, asked, when he came to himself, where his shield was: This he was solicitous for above any thing else. O! be asking in this temptation, and that duty, where is thy faith, and how it fares? This is the grace which God would have us chiefly judge and value ourselves by, because there is the least danger of priding in this self-emptying grace

grace of any other, Rom. xii 3. *I say through the grace of God given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith* There were many gifts which the *Corinthians* received from God, but he would have them think of themselves rather by their faith; and the reason is, that they may think soberly. Indeed all other graces are to be tried by our faith; if they be not fruits of faith, they are of no worth. This is the difference between a Christian and an honest Heathen. He values himself by his patience, temperance, liberality, and other moral virtues which he hath to shew above others; these he expects will commend him to God, and procure him a happiness after death; and in these he glories, and makes his boast while he lives. But the Christian is kept sober in the sight of these, because he hath a discovery of Christ, whose righteousness and holiness by faith become his; and he values himself by these more than what is inherent in him. I cannot better illustrate this, than by two men; the one a *courtier*, the other a *country-man*; both having fair estates, but the courtier greatest by far. Ask the country-gentleman, that hath no relation to court, or place in the prince's favour, what he is worth, and he will tell you, as his lands and money amount to; these he values himself by: But ask the courtier what he is worth, and he will tell you he values himself by the favour of his prince, more than by all his other estate. I can speak a big word (saith he) what my prince hath is mine (except his crown and royalty), his purse to maintain me, his love to embrace me, his power to defend me. The poor Heathens being strangers to God, and his favour in Christ, they blest themselves in the improvement of their natural stock, and that treasure of moral virtues which they had gathered together with their industry, and the restraint that was laid upon their corruptions by a secret hand, they were not aware of. But the believer having access by faith into this grace wherein he stands so high in court-favour with God by Jesus Christ, he doth and ought to value himself chiefly by his faith, rather than any other grace. Though none can shew these graces in their true heavenly beauty but a believer, yet they are not these, but Christ (who is his by faith) that he blesseth himself in. He can say, through mercy, that he hath a heart

heart beautified with those heavenly graces to which the Heathen's mock-virtues, and the proud self justiciary's mock-graces also, are no more to be compared, than the image in the glass is to the face, or the shadow to the man himself. He can say, he hath that holiness in truth which they have but in show. And this grace of God in him, he values infinitely above all the world's treasure; he had rather be the ragged saint, than robed sinner; yea, above his natural life, which he can be willing to lose, may he thereby but secure his spiritual life. But this is not the biggest word that a believer can say; he is not only partaker of the divine nature by that principle of holiness infused to him, but he is heir to all the holiness, yea, all the glorious perfections that are in God himself. All that God is, hath, or doth, he hath leave to call his own. God is pleased to be called his people's God. *The God of Israel,* 2 Sam. xxiii. 3. As a man's house and land bears the owners name upon it; so God is graciously pleased to carry his people's name on him, that all the world may know who are they he belongs to. *Naboth*'s field is called *the portion of Naboth,* 2 Kings ix. 21. so *God is called the portion of Jacob,* Jer. x. 16. Nothing hath God kept from his people (saving his crown and glory, that indeed *he will not give to another,* Isaiah xlii. 8.) if the Christian wants strength, God would have him make use of his; and that he may do it boldly and confidently, the Lord calls himself his people's strength, 1 Sam. xv. 29. *The strength of Israel will not lie.* Is it righteousness and holiness he is scanted in? Behold where it is brought unto his hand: *Christ is made unto us righteousness,* 1 Cor. i. 30. called therefore *the Lord our rightcousness,* Jer. xxxiii. 16. Is it love and mercy they would have? All the mercy in God is at their service, Psalm xxxi. 19. *O! how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee.* Mark the phrase, *Laid up for them.* His mercy and goodness is intended for them; as a father that lays by such a sum of money, and writes on the bag, this is a portion for such a child. But how comes the Christian to have this right to God, and all that vast and untold treasure of happiness which is in him? This, indeed, is greatly to be heeded; it is faith that gives him a good title unto all this. That which maketh him a child, makes him an heir. Now faith makes him a child of God, John i. 12. *To as many as received him,*

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to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on him; therefore if you would not call your birth-right into question, and bring your interest in Christ, and those glorious privileges that come along with him, under a sad dispute in your souls, look to your faith.

Quest. But what counsel can you give for the preserving of my faith?

Answ. First, That which was instrumental to beget thy faith, will be helpful to preserve thy faith. I mean the word of God. As it was seed for the former purpose in thy conversion, so now it is milk for the present sustenance of thy faith; be sucking at this breast. Children cannot suck long, nor digest much at a time, and therefore need the more frequent returns of their meals; such children are all believers: *Precept must be upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little:* The breast often drawn out for the nourishing of them up in their spiritual life, or else they cannot subsist. It was not ordinary that *Moses* should look so well as he did, after he had fasted so long, *Exod.* xxxiv. And truly it is a miraculous faith they must have, who will undertake to keep it alive, without taking any spiritual repast from the word. I have heard of some children that have been taken from their mothers breast as soon almost as born, and brought up by hand, who yet have done well for their natural life; but I shall not believe that a creature can thrive in his spiritual life, who casts off ordinances, and weans himself from the word, till I hear of some other way of provision that God hath made for the ordinary maintenance of it besides this; and I despair of living so long as to see this proved. I know some have been for a time persuaded to turn their backs on the word and ordinances; but they have returned well hunger-bit to their old fare again; yea, with *Naomi*, her bitter complaint in their mouths, *I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty*, Ruth i. 21. He that taught Christians to pray for their daily bread, did suppose they had need of it; and surely he did not mean corporeal bread only, who in the same chapter bids them *seek first the kingdom of God*, Mat. vi. 33. Well, Christian, prize thou the word, feed on the word, whether it be dished forth in a public sermon, in a conference with some Christian friend, or a more secret duty of reading and meditation by thyself. Let none of these be neglected, or carnally used by thee; and

and, with God's blessing thou shalt reap the benefit of it in thy faith; when thy stomach fails to the word, thy faith must needs begin to fail on the word. O! that Christians, who are so much in complaints of their weak faith, would turn them into enquiries, why it is so weak and declining? It is not because faith hath missed its wonted meals from the word: Thou haply hast formerly broke through many straits to keep thy acquaintance with God in his word, and wert well paid for that time which thou didst borrow of thy other occasions for this end, by that sweet temper then thou foundest thy heart in, to trust God and rely upon him in all conditions; but now, since thou hast discontinued thy acquaintance with God in his ordinances, thou perceivest a sad change; where thou couldst have trusted God, now thou art suspicious of him; those promises that were able in a hubbub of thy unruly passions to have hushed and quieted all in thy soul at their appearing in thy thoughts, have now, alas! but little authority over thy murmuring unbelieving heart, to keep it in any tolerable order: If it be thus with thee, poor soul, thy case is sad, and I cannot give thee better counsel for thy soul, than that which physicians give men in a consumption for their bodies. They ask them where they were born and bred up; and to their native air send them, as the best means of recovery. Thus soul, let me ask thee, if thou ever hadst faith, where was it born and bred up? Was it not in the sweet air of ordinances, hearing, meditating, conferring of the word, and praying over the word? Go, poor creature, and get thee quickly into thy native air, where thou didst draw thy first Christian breath, and where thy faith did so thrive for a time. No means more hopeful to set thy feeble faith on its legs again.

Secondly, Wouldst thou preserve thy faith, look to thy conscience. A good conscience is the bottom faith sails in; if the conscience be wrecked, how can it be thought that faith should be safe? If faith be the jewel, a good conscience is the cabinet in which it is kept: And if the cabinet be broken, the jewel must be in danger of losing. Now you know what sins waste the conscience; sins either deliberately committed, or impenitently continued in.

O! take heed of deliberate sins, like a stone thrown into a clear stream, they will so roil thy soul and muddy it, that

thou, who even now couldst see thy interest in the promise, wilt be at a loss to know what to think of thyself. They are like a fire on the top of the house, it will be no easy matter to quench it. But if thou hast been so unhappy as to fall into such a slough, take heed of lying in it by impenitency; the sheep may fall into a ditch, but it is the swine that wallows in it; and, therefore, how hard wilt thou find it to act thy faith on the promise, when thou art by thy filthy garments, and so unlike one of God's holy ones? It is dangerous to drink poison, but far more to let it lie in the body. Thou canst not act thy faith (though a believer) on the promise, so as to apply the pardon it presents to thy soul, till thou hast renewed thy repentance.

Thirdly, Exercise thy faith, if thou meanest to preserve it. We live by faith, and faith lives by exercise. As we say of some men, they are never well but at work; confine them to their bed or chair, and you kill them; so here, hinder faith from working, and you are enemies to the very life and being of it. Why do we act faith so little in prayer, but because we are no more frequent in it? Let the child seldom see its father or mother, and when he comes into their presence, he will not make much after them. Why are we no more able to live on a promise, when at a a plunge? Because we live no more with the promise. The more we converse with the promise, the more confidence we shall put in it. We do not trust strangers as we do our neighbours, in whose company we are every day. It were a rare way to secure our faith, to advance it and all our other graces, would we in our daily course labour to do all our actions, as in obedience to the command, so in faith on the promise. But, alas! how many enterprizes are undertaken, where faith is not called in, nor the promise consulted from one end of the business to the other? And, therefore, when we would make use of faith in some particular strait, wherein we think ourselves to be more than ordinarily at a loss, our faith itself is at a loss, and to seek. O! Christian, take heed of letting your faith be long out of work; if you do not use it when you ought, it may fail you when you desire it most.

Fourthly, Take special notice of that unbelief which yet remains in thee; and as it is putting forth daily its head in thy Christian course, be sure thou deeply humblest thyself before

before God for it. What thy faith loseth by every act of unbelief, it recovers again by thy repentance. *David*'s faith was on the mending hand when he could shame himself heartily for his unbelief, *Psalm* lxxiii. 22. he confesseth how *foolish and ignorant he was;* yea, saith he, *I was a beast before thee;* so irrational and brutish his unbelieving thoughts now appeared to him. And by this ingenuous humble confession, the malignity of his distemper breathes out, that presently his faith is able to act as high as ever. *Thou hast holden me by my right hand, thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and after receive me to glory,* ver. 23, 24. But so long thy unbelief is sure to grow upon thee, as thou art unhumbled for it. We have the reason why the people of *Laish* were so bad, Judges xviii. 7. *There was no Magistrate in the land that might put them to shame in any thing.* Christian, thou hast a Magistrate in thy bosom, commissioned by God himself, to check, reprove, and shame thee, when thou sinnest. Indeed all things go to wreck in that soul, where this doth not its office. There is no sin dishonours God more than unbelief, and this sword cuts his name deepest, when in the hand of a Saint. O! to be wounded in the house of his friends, this goes near the tender heart of God. And there is reason enough why God should take this sin so unkindly at a Saint's hand, if we consider the near relation he stands in to God. It would grieve an indulgent father, to see his own child come into court, and there bear witness against him, and charge him of some untruth in his words, more than if a stranger should do it; because, the testimony of a child, though when it is for the vindication of a parent, may lose some credit in the opinion of those that hear it, upon the suspicion of partiality; yet when against a parent, it seems to carry some more probability of truth, than what another, that is a stranger, says against him; because the band of natural affection with which the child is bound to his parent, is so sacred, that it will not be easily suspected; he can offer violence to it, but upon the more inviolable necessity of bearing witness to the truth. O! think of this (Christian) again and again; by thy unbelief thou bearest false-witness against God: And if thou, a child of God, speakest no better of thy heavenly Father, and presentest him in no fairer character to the world, it will be no wonder if they be confirmed in their hard thoughts

of God, even to final impenitency and unbelief, when they shall see how little credit he finds with thee, for all thy great profession of him. When we would sink the reputation of a man the lowest, we cannot use an expression that will do it more effectually than to say, He is such an one, that even his own children dare not trust him, nor give him a good word. O! Christian, ask thyself, whether thou couldst be willing to be the unhappy instrument to defame God, and take away his good name in the world; certainly thy heart trembles at the thought of it, if a Saint; and if it doth, then surely thy unbelief, by which thou hast done this so oft, will wound thee to the very heart; and, bleeding for what thou hast done, thou wilt beware of taking that sword into thy hand again, with which thou hast given so many a wound to the name of God and thy own peace.

Fifthly, If thou wouldst preserve thy faith, labour to encrease thy faith. None in more danger of losing what they have, than those poor spirited men, who are content with what they have. A spark is sooner smothered than a flame; a drop easier drunk up and dried than a river. The stronger thy faith is, the safer thy faith is from the enemies assaults. The intelligence which an enemy hath of a castle being weakly provided for a siege, is enough to bring him against it, which else should not have been troubled with his company. The Devil is a coward, and he loves to fight on the greatest advantage, and greater he cannot have, than the weakness of the Christian's faith; didst thou but know (Christian) the many privileges of a strong faith above a weak, thou wouldst never rest till thou hadst it. Strong faith comes conqueror out of those temptations where weak faith is foiled and taken prisoner. Those *Philistines* could not stand before *Samson* in his strength, who durst dance about him scornfully in his weakness. When *David*'s faith was up, how undauntedly did he look death in the face, 1 *Sam.* xxx. 6. But when that was out of heart, O! how poor spirited is he, ready to run his head into every hole, though never so dishonourably, to save himself, 1 *Sam.* xxi. 13. Strong faith frees the Christian from those heart-rending thoughts, which weak faith must needs be opprest with. *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee,* Isaiah xxvi. 3. so much faith, so much inward peace and quietness. If little faith, then little peace and sere-

nity,

nity, through the storms that our unbelieving fears will necessarily gather. If strong faith, then strong peace, for so the ingemination in the *Hebr. peace, peace,* imports. It is confessed, weak faith hath as much peace with God through Christ, as the other hath by his strong faith, but not so much bosom-peace. Weak faith will as surely land the Christian in heaven as strong faith; for it is impossible the lest dram of true grace should perish, being all incorruptible seed: But the weak doubting Christian is not like to have so pleasant a voyage thither, as another with strong faith. Though all in the ship come safe to shore, yet he that is all the way sea-sick, hath not so comfortable a voyage as he that is strong and healthful. There are many delightful prospects occur in a journey, which he that is sick and weak loseth the pleasure of: But the strong man views all with abundance of delight; and, though he wisheth with all his heart he was at home, yet the entertainment he hath from these, much shorten and sweeten his way to him. Thus, Christian, there are many previous delights which Saints travelling to heaven meet on their way thither (besides what God hath for them at their journeys end). But it is the Christian, whose faith is strong and active on the promise, that finds them: This is he, who sees those spiritual glories in the promise, that ravish his soul with unspeakable delight, while the doubting Christian's eye of faith, is so gummed up with unbelieving fears, that he can see little to affect him in it. This is he that goes singing all the way with the promise in his eye; while the weak Christian (kept in continual pain with his own doubts and jealousies) goes sighing and mourning with an heavy heart, because his interest in the promise is yet under a dispute in his own thoughts. As you would not therefore live uncomfortably, and have a dull melancholy walk of it to heaven, labour to strengthen your faith.

Quest. But may be you will ask, How may I know whether my faith be strong or weak?

Answ. First, The more entirely the Christian can rely on God, upon his naked word in the promise, the stronger his faith is. He surely putteth greater confidence in a man that will take his own word, or single bond for a sum of money, than he who dares not, except some others will be bound for him. When we trust God for his bare promise, we trust him

him on his own credit, and this is faith indeed. He that walks without crutches is stronger than he that needs these to lean on. The promise is the ground faith goes on; sense and reason are the crutches which weak faith leans on too much in its acting. Now soul, enquire,

First, Canst thou bear up thyself on the promise, though the crutch of sense and present feeling be not at hand? may be thou hast had some discoveries of God's love, and beamings forth of his favour upon thee, and so long as the sun shined thus in at thy window, thy heart was lightsome, and thou thoughtest thou shouldst never distrust God more; but how findest thou thy heart now, since those sensible demonstrations are withdrawn, and may be some frowning providence sent in their room? Dost thou dispute the promise in thy thoughts, as not knowing whether thou mayst venture to cast anchor on it or no? Because thou hast lost the sense of his love, does thy eye of faith fail thee also, that thou hast lost the sight of his mercy and truth in the promise? Surely the eye of faith is weak, or else it would read the promise without these spectacles. The little child, indeed, thinks the mother is quite lost if she goes out of the room; but as it grows older, so he will wiser: And truly so will the believer. Christian, bless God for the experiences and sensible taste thou hast at any time of his love; but know, that we cannot judge of our faith, whether weak or strong by them. Experiences (saith *Parisiensis)* are like crutches, which do indeed help a lame man to go, but they do not make the lame man sound or strong, food and physic must do that. And, therefore, Christian, labour to lean more on the promise, and less on sensible expressions of God's love, whether it be in the present feeling, or past experiences of it. I would not take you off from improving these, and limiting the actings of our faith. A strong man, though he doth not lean on his staff all the way he goes, as the lame man doth on his crutch (which bears his whole weight) yet he may make good use of it now and then to defend himself, when set upon by a thief or dog in his way. Thus the strong Christian may make good use of his experiences in some temptations, though he doth not lay the weight of his faith upon them, but the promise. Canst thou,

Secondly, Bear thyself upon the promise, when the other crutch of Reason breaks under thee, or does thy faith even fall

fall to the ground with it? That is a strong faith indeed that can trample upon the improbabilities and impossibilities which reason would be objecting against the performance of the promise, and gives credit to the truth of it with a *non obstante*. Thus *Noah* fell hard to work about the Ark, upon the credit he gave both to the threatening and promissory part of God's word, and never troubled his head to clear the matter to his reason, how these strange things could come to pass. And it is imputed to the strength of *Abraham*'s faith, that he would not suffer his own narrow reason to have the hearing of the business, when God promised him a *Michaelmas spring*, a son in his old age. Rom. iv. 19. *And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body, that was now dead;* and skilful swimmers are not afraid to go beyond their depth, whereas young learners feel for the ground, and are loth to go far from the bank side. Strong faith fears not, when God carries the creature beyond the depth of his reason: *We know not what to do* (said good *Jehoshaphat*), *but our eyes are upon thee,* 2 Chron. xx. As if he had said, we are in a sea of troubles, beyond our own help, or any thought how we can wind out of these straits, but our eyes are upon thee, we dare not give our case for desperate, so long as there is strength in thine arm, tenderness in thy bowels, and truth in thy promise. Whereas weak faith, that is groping for some footing for reason to stand on, is taken up, how to reconcile the promise and the creatures understanding; hence those many questions which drop from its mouth. When Christ said, *Give ye them to eat*, Mark vi. his Disciples ask him, *Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread?* as if Christ's bare word could not spare that cost and trouble. *Whereby shall I know this* (saith *Zacharias* to the Angel) *for I am an old man?* Alas! his faith was not strong enough to digest, at present, this strange news.

Secondly, The more composed and contented the heart is under the changes which Providence brings upon the Christian's state and condition in the world, the stronger his faith; weak bodies cannot bear change of weather so well as healthful and strong do; hot and cold, fair or foul, cause no great alteration in the strong man; but, alas! the other is laid up by them, or, at best, goes complaining. Thus strong faith can live in any climate, and travel in all weather.

weather. *I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content*, saith *Paul*, Phil. iv. 11. Alas! all Christ's scholars are not of *Paul*'s form; weak faith hath not yet got the mastery of this hard lesson. When God turns thy health into sickness, thy abundance into penury, thy honour into scorn and contempt, in what language dost thou now make thy condition known to God? Is thy spirit imbittered into discontent, which thou ventest in murmuring complaints? or art thou well satisfied with God's dealings, so as to acquiesce cheerfully in thy present portion, not from insensibility of the affliction, but approbation of divine appointment? If the latter, thy faith is strong. First, it shews God hath a throne in thy heart; thou reverence his authority, and own his sovereignty, or thou wouldst not acquiesce in his orders. *I was dumb because thou didst it*, Psalm xxxix. 9. If the blow had come from any other hand, he could not have taken it so silently. When the servant strikes the child, he runs to his father, and makes his complaint; but though the father doth more to him, he complains not of his father, nor seeks redress from any other; because it is his father whose authority he reveres. Thus, thou comportest thyself toward God, and what, but a strong faith, can enable thee? *Be still, and know that I am God*, Psalm xlvi. 11. we must know God believingly, to be what he is, before our hearts will be still. Secondly, this acquiescency of spirit, under the disposition of Providence, shews that thou dost not only stand in awe of his sovereignty, but hast comfortable thoughts of his mercy and goodness in Christ. Thou believest he can soon, and will certainly make thee amends, or else thou couldst not so easily part with these enjoyments. The child goes willingly to bed, when others, may be, are going to supper at a great feast in the family; but the mother promiseth the child, to save something for him against the morning, this the child believes, and is content. Surely, thou hast something in the eye of thy faith, which will recompense all thy present loss, and this makes thee fall so willingly, when others feast, be sick, when others are well. *Paul* tells us, why he and his brethren in affliction did not faint, 2 *Cor.* iv. 16. they saw heaven coming to them, while earth was going from them. *For which cause we faint not, for our light affliction, which is but for*

for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Thirdly, The more able to wait long for answers to our desires and prayers, the stronger faith is. It shews the tradesman to be poor and needy, when he must have ready money for what he sells. They that are fore-handed, are willing to give time, and able to forbear long. Weak faith is all for the present; if it hath not presently its desires answered, then it grows jealous, lays down sad conclusions against itself, his prayer was not heard, or he is not one God loves, and the like. *I said in my haste, all men are liars;* but strong faith, that can trade with God for time, yea, wait God's leisure, *he that believes makes not haste,* Isaiah xxviii. 16. He knows his money is in a good hand, and he is not over-quick to call for it home, knowing well, that the longest voyages have the richest returns. As rich ground can forbear rain longer than lean or sandy, which must have a shower ever and anon, or the corn on it fades; or as a strong healthy man can fast longer, without faintness, than the sickly and weak: so the Christian of strong faith can stay longer for spiritual refreshing from the presence of the Lord, in the returns of his mercy, and discoveries of his love to him, than one of weak faith.

Fourthly, The more the Christian can lose or suffer upon the credit of the promise, the stronger his faith is; if you should see a man part with a fair inheritance, and leave his kindred and country, where he might pass his days in the embraces of his friends, and the delicious fare which a plentiful estate would afford him, to follow a friend to the other end of the world, with hunger and hardship, through sea and land, and a thousand perils, you would say, that this man had strong confidence in his friend, and a dear love to him; nay, if he should do all this for a friend, whom he never saw, upon the bare credit of a letter, which he sends to invite him, with a promise of great things he will do for him; now to throw all his present possessions and enjoyments at his heels, and willingly put himself into the condition of a poor pilgrim and traveller, that he may come to his dear friend, this adds to the wonder of his confidence. Such gallant spirits we read of, 1 Pet. i. 6, 7, 8. *Whom having not seen, ye love, in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice,* &c. observe the place, and you shall find

them in sorrowful plight, *in heaviness through manifold temptations;* yet because their way lies through the sloughs, to the enjoyment of God and Christ (whom they never saw or knew, but by the report the word makes) they can turn their back of the world's friendship and joys, and go with a merry heart through the deepest of them all; here is glorious faith indeed. It is not praising of heaven, and wishing we were there, but a cheerful abandoning the dearest pleasures, and embracing the greatest sufferings of the world, will evidence our faith to be both true and strong.

Fifthly, The more easy the Christian can repel motions, and resist temptations to sin, the stronger is his faith. The net which holds the little fish fast, the greater and stronger easily breaks through. The Christian's faith is strong or weak, as he finds it easy or hard to break from temptations to sin; when an ordinary temptation holds thee by the heel, and thou art entangled in it, like a flie in the spider's web, much ado to get off, and persuade thy heart from yielding: Truly it speaks faith very feeble: To have no strength to oppose the assaults of sin and lust, speaks the heart void of faith; where faith hath not a hand to prostrate an enemy, it yet hath a hand to lift up against it, and a voice to cry out for help to heaven; some way or other faith will shew its dislike, and enter its protest against sin; and to have little strength to resist, evidenceeth a weak faith. *Peter*'s faith was weak, when a maid's voice dashed him out of countenance; but it was well amended, when he could withstand, and with a noble constancy disdain threats of a whole counsel, *Acts* xiv. 17. Christian, compare thyself with thyself: Do now thy lusts as powerfully inveigle thy heart, and carry it away from God, as they did some months or years ago? or canst thou in truth say, thy heart is got above them, since thou hast known more of Christ, and had a view of his spiritual glories, thou canst now pass by their door, and not look in; yea, when they knock at thy door in a temptation, thou canst shut it upon them with disdain? surely thou mayest know thy faith is grown stronger. When we see the clothes, which a year or two ago were fit for the person, will not now come on him, we may easily be persuaded the person is much grown. If thy faith were no more grown, those temptations, which fitted thee then, would like thee as well now; find but the power of sin die, and thou mayest know that faith is more lively and vigorous. The harder the blow, the

the stronger the arm is that gives it. A child cannot strike such a blow as a man. Weak faith cannot give such a home blow to sin as strong faith.

Sixthly, The more ingenuity and love is in thy obediential walking, the stronger thy faith is. Faith works by love, and therefore its strength may be discovered by the strength of that love it puts forth in the Christian's actings. The strength of a man's arm, that draws a bow, is seen by the force the arrow flies with. And certainly, the strength of our faith may be known by the force our love mounts to God with. It is impossible that weak faith (which is unable to draw the promise as a strong faith can) should leave such a forcible impression on the heart to love God, as the stronger faith doth. If, therefore, thy heart be strongly carried out from love to God, to abandon sin, perform duty, and exert acts of obedience to his command; know thy place, and take it with humble thankfulness, thou art a graduate in the art of believing. The Christian's love advanceth by equal paces with his faith; as the heat of the day increaseth with the climbing sun; the higher that mounts towards its meridian the hotter the day grows. So, the higher faith lifts Christ in the Christian, the more intense his love to Christ grows, which now sets him on work after another sort, than he was wont. Before, when he was to mourn for his sin, he was acted by slavish fear; but now acts of repentance are not distasteful and formidable, since faith hath discovered mercy to sit on justice's brow, and undeceived the creature of those false and cruel thoughts of God, which ignorantly he had taken up concerning him. He doth not now *hate the word repentance* (as *Luther* said he once did, before he understood that place, *Rom.* i. 17.); but goes about the work with sweet apprehensions of a good God, that stands ready with the spunge of his mercy, dipt in Christ's blood, to blot out his sins as fast as he scores them up, by his humble confession of them. And the same might be said concerning all other offices of Christian piety; strong faith makes the soul ingenuous, it doth not pay the performance of any duty, as an oppressed subject doth an heavy tax, with a deep sigh, to think how much he parts with, but as freely as a child would present his father with an apple of that orchard, which he holds by gift from him; indeed the child, when young, is much servile and selfish, forbearing what his fa-

ther forbids, for fear of the rod, and doing what he commands, for some fine thing or other, that his father bribes him with, more than for pure love to his person, or obedience to his will and pleasure: But as he grows up, and comes to understand himself better, and the relation he stands in, with the many obligations to filial obedience, then his servility and selfishness wear off, and his natural affection will prevail more with him to please his father, than any other argument whatever. And so with the Christian, where faith is of any growth.

Seventhly, The more able faith is to sweeten the thoughts of death, and make it desirable to the Christian, the stronger his faith. Things that are very sharp or sour, will take much sugar to make them sweet. Death is one of those things which hath the most ungrateful taste to the creatures palate. O! it requires a strong faith to make the serious thoughts of it sweet and desirable. I know some in a pet have profest great desires of dying, but it hath been, as a sick man desires to change his place, merely out of a weariness of, and discontent with his present condition, without any due consideration of what they desire. But a soul that knows the consequences of death, and the unchangeableness of that state (whether of bliss or misery) that it certainly marries us to, will never cheerfully call for death in his cordial desires, till he be in some measure resolved from the promise, what entertainment he may expect from God, when he comes into that other world; and that a weak faith will not do. I confess, that sometime a Christian of very weak faith may meet death with as little fear upon his spirit, yea, more joy, than one of a far stronger faith, when he is held up by the chin, by some extraordinary comfort poured into his soul from God; which should God withdraw, his fears would return upon him, as a sick man that hath been cheered with a strong cordial, does his feebleness, when the efficacy of it is spent: But we speak of the ordinary way how Christians come to have their hearts raised above the fear, yea, into a strong desire of death, and that is by attaining to a strong faith. God can indeed make a feast of a few loaves, and multiply the weak Christian's little faith on a sudden, as he lies on a sick-bed, into a spread table of all varieties of consolations, but I fear that God will not do this miracle for that man, who, upon the expectation of this, contents himself with

with the little provision of faith he hath, and labours not to increase his store against that spending time.

CHAP. XI.

Sheweth, it is the duty of a Christian to own the grace of God in him, and not deny it; with the resolution of some scruples, with which weak Saints dispute against the truth of their own faith.

WE come to the second word of exhortation, we have to speak to the Saints. If faith be such a choice grace, and thou hast it, deny not what God hath done for thee. Which is worst, thinkest thou, the sinner to hide his sin and deny it, or the Christian to hide and deny his faith? I confess the first does worst, if we look to the intenion of the persons; for the sinner hides his sin out of a wicked end, and the doubting soul means well, he is afraid to play the hypocrite, and be found a liar in saying he hath, what he fears he hath not; but if we consider the consequence of the Christian's disowning the grace of God in him, and what use the Devil makes of it, for the leading him into many other sins, it will not be so easy to resolve whose sin is the greatest. Good *Joseph* meant piously, when he had thoughts of putting away secretly his espoused *Mary* (thinking no other, but that she had played the whore), and yet it would have been a sad act if he had persisted, especially after the Angel had told him, that which was conceived in her to be of the Holy Ghost. Thus thou, poor mourning soul, may be art oft thinking to put away thy faith, as some by-blow of Satan, and base born counterfeit grace, begot on thy hypocritical heart by the father of lies. Well, take heed what thou dost; hast thou had no vision (not extraordinary of an Angel or immediate revelation), but ordinary of the Spirit of God (I mean) in his word and ordinances, encouraging thee from those characters which are in the Scripture given of faith, and the conformity thy faith hath to them, to take and own thy

thy faith, as that which is conceived in thee by the Holy Ghost, and not a brat formed by the delusion of Satan in the womb of thy own imagination? If so, be afraid of bearing false witness against the grace of God in thee. As there is that makes himself rich in faith, that hath nothing of this grace, so there is that maketh himself poor, that hath great store of this riches. Let us, therefore, hear what are the grounds of this thy suspicion, that we may see whether thy fears be imaginary and false.

Object. First, Saith the poor soul, I am afraid I have no true faith, because I have not those joys and consolations which others have who believe.

Answ. First, Thou mayest have inward peace, though not joy. The day may be still and calm, though not glorious and sunshine; though the Comforter be not come with his ravishing consolations, yet he may have hushed the storm of thy troubled spirit, and true peace as well as joy is the consequent of faith unfeigned.

Secondly, Suppose thou hast not yet attained so much as to this inward peace, yet know, thou hast no reason to question the truth of thy faith for want of this. We have peace with God as soon as we believe, but not always with ourselves. The pardon may be past the princes hand and seal, and yet not put into the prisoners hand. Thou thinkest them too rash, who judged *Paul* a murderer by the viper that fastened on his hand. And what art thou, who condemnest thyself for an unbeliever, because of those troubles and inward agonies which may fasten for a time on the spirit of the most gracious child God hath on earth.

Object. 2. O! but can there be any true faith where there is so much doubting as I find in myself?

Answ. There is a doubting which the Scripture opposeth to the least degree of faith. Our blessed Saviour tells them what wonders they shall do, if they believe and doubt not, *Matt.* xxi. 21. and *Luke* xvii 6. he tells his disciples, *If they have faith as a grain of mustard-seed,* they shall do as much. That which is faith, without doubting in *Matthew,* is faith as a grain of mustard-seed in *Luke.* But again, there is a doubting which the Scripture opposeth not to the truth of faith, but the strength of faith, Matt. xiv. 31. *O! thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?* These are the words of Christ to sinking *Peter,* in which he chides his doubting

doubting, yet acknowledges the truth of his faith, though weak. All doubting is evil in its nature, yet some doubting, though evil in itself, doth evidence some grace that is good to be in the person; as smoke proves some fire, and peevishness, in a sick person, that before lay senseless, is a good sign of mending, though itself a bad thing. But I shall give some help to the doubting soul, that he may know what his doubting is symptomatical of; whether of true faith (though weak) or of no faith. For this, I shall lay down four characters of those doubtings which accompany true faith.

First, The doubtings of a true believer are attended with much shame and sorrow of spirit for those doubtings. I appeal to thy conscience (poor doubting soul) whether the consideration of this one sin doth not cost thee many a tear and heavy sigh, which others know not of? Now, I pray, from whence come these? will unbelief mourn for unbelief? or sin put itself to shame? No, it shews there is a principle of faith in the soul that takes God's part; and cannot see his promises, and name wronged by unbelief without protesting against it, and mourning under it, though the hands of this grace be too weak at present to drive the enemy out. The law cleared the *Damsel that cryed out in the field, Deut.* xxii. 27.; and so will the gospel thee, who sincerely mourn for thy unbelief. That holy man, whoever he was, *Psalm* lxxvii. was far gone in this doubting disease. How many times do we find his unbelief putting the mercy and faithfulness of God (which should be beyond all dispute in our hearts) to the question, and dubious vote in his distempered soul? He might with as much reason have asked his soul, whether there was a God, as whether his mercy was clean gone, and his promise fail? Yet so far did his fears in this hurry carry him aside; but at last you have him acknowledging his folly, ver. 10. *and I said, This is my infirmity.* This I may thank thee for; O! my unbelief, thou enemy of God and my soul: Thou wilt be puzzling me with needless fears, and make me think and speak so unworthily of my God. This proved there was faith at the bottom of his unbelief.

Secondly, The doubtings of a sincere believer are accompanied with ardent desires after those things, which it most doubts. The weak believer questions, whether God loves him or no, but he desires it more than life; and this is the language

language of a gracious soul, Psalm lxiii. 3. *Thy loving kindness is better than life.* He doubts whether Christ be his, yet, if you ask him what value he sets upon Christ, and what he would give for Christ, he can tell you, and that truly, that no price should be too great if he were to be bought; no condition that God offers Christ upon, appears to him hard. And this is the judgment which only the believing soul can have of Christ, 1 Peter ii. 7. *unto you therefore which believe, he is precious.* In a word, he doubts whether he be truly holy or counterfeit; but his soul pants and thirsts after those graces most, which he can see least; he, to him, should be the more welcome messenger, that brings him the news of a broken heart, than another that tells him of a whole crown and kingdom fallen to him; he disputes every duty and action he doth, whether it be according to the rule of the word; and yet he passionately desires that he could walk without one wry step from it; and doth not quarrel with the word, because it is so strict, but with his heart, because it is so loose; and how great a testimony these give of a gracious frame of heart, see *Psalm* cxix. ver. 20, 140. where *David* brings these, as the evidence of his grace. Canst thou, therefore, poor soul, let out thy heart strongly after Christ, and his graces, while thou dost not see thy interest in either? Be of good cheer, thou art not so great a stranger with these as thou thinkest. These strong desires are the consequence of some taste thou hast had of them already. And these doubts may proceed, not from an absolute want, but the violence of thy desires, which are not satisfied with what thou hast. It is very ordinary for excessive love to beget excessive fear, and those groundless. The wife, because she loves her husband dearly, fears when he is abroad she shall never see him more, one while she thinks he is sick, another while killed, and thus her love torments her without any just cause, when her husband is all the while well, and on his way home. A jewel of great price, that we highly value, if laid out of sight, the extreme estimate we set on it, makes us presently think it lost. It is the nature of passions in this our imperfect state, when strong and violent, to disturb our reason, and hide things from our eye, which else were easy to be seen. Thus many poor doubting souls are looking to find that faith which they have already in their bosoms, being hid from them, merely by the vehement desire of it, and fear they should

should be cheated with a false one for a true; as the *Damsel opened not the door for gladness to Peter*, Acts xii. 14. her joy at present made her forget what she did; so the high value the poor doubting Christian sets on faith, together with an excess of longing after it, suffer him not to entertain so high an opinion of himself, as to think he at present hath that jewel in his bosom which he so infinitely prizeth.

Thirdly, The doubtings of a truly believing soul make him more inquisitive, how he may get what he sometimes fears he hath not; many sad thoughts pass to and fro in his soul, whether Christ be his or no, whether he may lay claim to the promise or no; and these cause such a commotion in his spirit, that he cannot rest till he come to some resolution in his own thoughts from the word concerning it; therefore, as *Ahashuerus*, when he could not sleep, called for the records and chronicles of his kingdom; so the doubting soul betakes himself to the record of Heaven (the word of God in the Scripture), and one while he is reading there, another while looking into his own heart, if he can find there any thing, that answers the characters of Scripture faith. *Asaph*, Psalm lxxvii. when he was at a loss, what to think of himself, and many doubts clogged his faith, insomuch that the thinking of God encreased his trouble, he did not sit down without regarding, whether God loved him or no; but *communes with his own heart, and his spirit makes diligent search.* Thus it is with every sincere soul under doubtings; he dares no more sit down contented in that unresolved condition, than one who thinks he smells fire in his house, dares settle himself to sleep, till he hath looked in every room and corner, and satisfied himself that all is safe, lest he should be waked with the fire about his ears in the night; and the poor doubting soul much more afraid, lest it should wake with hell fire about it. Whereas, a soul in a state of unbelief is secure and careless. The old world did not believe the threatening of the flood, and they spent no thoughts about the matter; it is at their doors and windows before they had used any means to escape it.

Fourthly, In the midst of the true believer's doubtings, there is a secret purpose in his heart to cleave to Christ, at the same time that *Peter*'s feet were sinking into the waters, he was lifting up a prayer to Christ, and this proved the

truth of his faith, as the other its weakness. So *Jonah* had many fears, and sometimes so predominant, that as bad humours settle into a sore, so they gathered into a hasty unbelieving conclusion; yet then his faith had some little secret hold on God; Jonah ii. 4. *Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight, yet I will look again toward thy holy temple,* and ver. 7. *When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord.* Holy *David* also, though he could not rid his soul of all those fears, which got into it through his weak faith, as water into a leaking ship, yet he hath his hand at the pump, and takes up a firm resolution against them, Psalm lvi. 3. *At what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.* The doubting Christian sinks, as a traveller in a slough, where the bottom is firm, and so recovers himself; but the unbeliever sinks in his fears, as a man in a quicksand, lower and lower, till he be swallowed up into despair. The weak Christian's doubting, is like the wavering of a ship at anchor; he is moved, yet not removed from his hold on Christ; but the unbeliever's, like the wavering of a wave, which having nothing to stay it, is wholly at the mercy of the wind, James i. 6. *Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed.*

Object. 3. O! but, saith another, I fear mine is a presumptuous faith; and if so, it cannot be right.

Answ. First, A presumptuous faith is an easy faith; it hath no enemy of Satan or our own corrupt hearts to oppose it, and so, like a weed, shoots up and grows rank on a sudden. The Devil never hath the sinner surer than when dreaming in this fool's paradise, and walking in his sleep, amidst his vain fantastical hopes of Christ and salvation. And, therefore, he is so far from waking him, that he draws the curtains close about him, that no light nor noise in his conscience may break his rest; did you ever know the thief call up him in the night, whom he meant to rob and kill? no, sleep is his advantage. But true faith he is a sworn enemy against; he persecutes it in the very cradle, as *Herod* did Christ; he pours a flood of wrath after it as soon as it betrays its own birth, by crying and lamenting after the Lord; if thy faith be legitimate, *Naphtali* may be its name; and thou may say, with great wrestlings have I wrestled with Satan and my own base heart, and at last have prevailed. You know the answer that *Rebecca* had, when she enquired

enquired of God about the striving of the children in her womb; *two nations* (God told her) *were in her womb.* If thou canst find the like strife in thy soul, thou mayest comfort thyself, that it is from two contrary principles, faith and unbelief, which are lusting one against another; and thy unbelief, which is the elder (however now it strives for the mastery) shall serve faith the younger.

Secondly, Presumptuous faith is lame of one hand, it hath a hand to receive pardon, and heaven from God, but no hand to give up itself to God. True faith hath the use of both hands. *My beloved is mine,* there the soul takes Christ, *and I am his;* there she surrenders herself to the use and service of Christ. Now, didst thou ever pass over thyself freely to Christ? I know none but will profess they do this. But the presumptuous soul, like *Ananias,* lies to the Holy Ghost, by keeping back part, yea, the chief part of that he promised to lay at Christ's feet. This lust he sends out of the way, when he should deliver it up to justice; and that creature-enjoyment he twines about, and cannot persuade his heart to trust God with the disposure of it, but cries out when the Lord calls for it, *Benjamin shall not go;* his life is bound up in it, and if God will have it from him, he must take it by force, for there is no hope of gaining his consent. If this is the true picture of thy faith, and temper of thy soul, then verily thou blessest thyself in an idol, and mistakest a bold face for a believing heart: But if thou be as willing to be faithful to Christ, as to pitch thy faith on Christ; if thou countest it as great a privilege, that Christ should have a throne in thy heart and love, as that thou shouldst have a place and room in his mercy. In a word, if thou be plain-hearted, and wouldst not hide a sin, nor lock up a creature-enjoyment from him, but desirest freely to give up thy dearest lust to the gibbet, and thy sweetest enjoyments to stay with or go from thee, as thy God thinks fit (though all this be with much regret and discontent from a malignant party of the flesh within thee), thou provest thyself a sound believer. And the Devil may as well say that himself believeth, as that thou presumest; if this be to presume, be thou yet more presumptuous. Let the Devil nickname thee and thy faith as he pleaseth; the rose-water is not the less sweet, because one writes worm-wood water on the glass. The Lord knows who are his, and will own them for his true

children, and their graces for the sweet fruits of his Spirit, though a false title be set on them by Satan and the world, yea, sometimes by believers on themselves. The father will not deny his child, because he, in a violent fit of a fever, talks idle, and denies him to be his father.

Thirdly, The presumptuous faith is a sapless and unsavoury faith; when an unsound heart pretends to greatest faith on Christ, even then it finds no savour, tastes no sweetness in Christ. No, he hath his old tooth in his head, which makes him relish still the gross food of sensual enjoyments above Christ and his spiritual dainties; would he but freely speak what he thinks, he must confess, if he were put to his choice, whether he would sit with Christ and his children to be entertained with the pleasures they enjoy, from spiritual communion with him in his promises and ordinances; or had rather sit with the servants, and have the scraps which God allows the men of the world their full bags and bellies of carnal treasure. He brags of his interest in God, but he cares not how little he is in the presence of God in any duty or ordinances; certainly, if he were such a favourite as he speaks, he would be more at court than he is. He hopes to be saved, he saith, but he draws not his wine of joy at his tap. It is not the thoughts of heaven that comforts him, but what he hath in the world and of the world; when the world's vessel is out, and creature-joy spent, alas! the poor wretch can find little relief from, or relish in his pretended hopes of heaven, and interest in Christ, but he is still whining after the other. Whereas true faith alters the very creature's palate: No feast so sweet to the believer as Christ is: Let God take all other dishes off the board, and leave but Christ; he counts his feast is not gone, he hath what he likes; but let all else stand, health, estate, friends (and what else the world sets a high value on), if Christ be withdrawn, he soon misseth his dish, and makes his moan, and saith, alas! who hath taken away my Lord? It is Christ that seasons all his enjoyments, and makes them savory meat to his palate; but without him, they have no more taste than the white of an egg without salt.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

The Saints enemy described with his warlike provision, fiery darts, and what they are.

WE have done with the exhortation, and now come to the second general part of the Verse, *i. e.* A powerful argument pressing this exhortation, contained in these words: *Whereby ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. Ye shall be able*, not an uncertain, may be; but he is peremptory and absolute: *Ye shall be able*, but what to do? *Able to quench*, not only to resist and repel, but to quench; but what shall they quench? not ordinary temptations only, but the worst arrows the Devil hath in his quiver, *fiery darts*, and not some few of them, *but all the fiery darts of the wicked.*

In this second general, there are these two particulars:

First, The Saint's enemy described.

Secondly, The power and puissance of faith over this enemy.

First, Here is the Saint's enemy described by their nature, *wicked;* something I have said of this, *ver.* 12. where Satan is called *spiritual wickedness:* I shall at present, therefore, pass it over with the lighter hand. Certainly there is some special lesson, that God would have his people learn even from this attribute of the Devil and his limbs (for the whole pack of devils, and devillish men, are here intended), that they are represented to the Saint's consideration by this name so oft *as wicked.* I shall content myself with two ends, that I conceive God principally aims at by this name.

First, They are called wicked, as an odious name, whereby God would raise his people's stomachs to a loathing of them, yea, provoke their pure souls to the greatest hatred of them, and especially of sin, that makes them so odious.

First, They are called wicked, as an odious name, whereby God would raise his children's stomachs into a loathing of

of sin above all things in the world, and provoke their pure souls as to hatred and detestation of all sin, so a vigorous resistance of the Devil, and his instruments, as such who are wicked, which is a name that makes him detestable above any other. God would have us know, that when he himself would speak the worst he can of the Devil, he can think of no name for the purpose like this, to say, he is *the wicked one.* The name which exalts God highest, and is the very excellency of all his other excellencies, is, that he is *the holy one, and none holy as the Lord.* This, therefore, gives the Devil the blackest brand of infamy, that he is the wicked one, and none wicked to that heighth besides himself. Could holiness be separated from any other of God's attributes (which is the heighth of blasphemy to think), the glory of them would be departed. And could the Devil's wickedness be removed from his torments and misery, the case would be exceedingly altered; we ought then to pity him, whom now me must no less than hate and abominate with a perfect hatred.

First, Consider this, all ye who live in sin, and blush not to be seen in the practice of it. O! that you would behold your faces in this glass, and you should see whom you look like; truly, no. other than the Devil himself, and in that which makes him most odious, which is his wickedness; never more spit at the name of the Devil, nor seem to be scared at any ill shapen picture of him, for thou carriest a far more ugly one in thy own wicked bosom, The more wicked, the more like the Devil; who can draw the Devil's picture like himself? If thou be a wicked wretch, thou art of the Devil himself. *Cain was of that wicked one,* 1 John iii. 12. Every sin thou commitest, is a new line that the Devil draws on thy soul. And if the image of God in a Saint, which the Spirit of God is drawing for many years together, will be so curious a piece, when the last line shall be drawn in Heaven. O! think then, how frightful and horrid a creature thou wilt be, when, after all the Devil's pains here on earth to imprint his image upon thee, thou shalt see thyself in hell, as wicked to the full, as a wicked Devil can make thee.

Secondly, Consider this, O ye Saints, and bestow first your pity on those poor forlorn souls that are under the power of a wicked Devil. It is a lamentable judgment to live

live under a wicked government, though it be but of men. For a servant in a family to be under a wicked master, is a heavy plague. *David* reckons it among other great curses, Psalm cix. 6. *Set a wicked man over him.* O! what is it then to have a wicked spirit over him? he would shew himself very kind to his friend, that should wish him to be the worst slave in *Turkey,* rather than the best servant of sin or Satan. And yet see the folly of men: *Solomon* tells us, *when the wicked bear rule, the people mourn,* Prov. ix. 2.; but when a wicked Devil rules, poor besotted sinners laugh and are merry. Well, you who are not out of your wits so far, but know sin's service to be the creatures utmost misery, mourn for them, that go themselves laughing to sin, and by sin to hell. And,

Secondly, Let it fill thy heart (Christian) with zeal and indignation against Satan in all his temptations, remember he is wicked, and he can come for no good. Thou knowest the happiness of serving a holy God, surely then thou hast an answer ready, against this wicked one comes to draw thee to sin. Canst thou think of fouling thy hands about his base drudgery, after they have been used to such pure work as the service of thy God is?

Secondly, They are called wicked, as a name of contempt, for the encouragement of all believers in their combat with them. As if God had said, fear them not, they are a wicked company you go against. And truly, if the Saints must have enemies, the worse they are, the better it is. It would put mettle into a coward, to fight with such a crew. Wickedness must needs be weak; the Devil's guilt in their own bosom tells them, their cause is lost, before the battle is fought. They fear thee, Christian, because thou art holy, and therefore thou need not be dismayed at them who are wicked. Thou lookest on them as subtil, mighty, and many, and then thy heart fails thee; but look on all these subtil mighty spirits as wicked ungodly wretches, that hate God more than thee, yea, thee, for thy kindred to him, and thou canst not but take heart. Whose side is God on, that thou art afraid? Will he, that rebuked kings for touching his anointed ones, and doing them harm in their bodies and estates, stand still think thou, and suffer these wicked spirits, to attempt the life of God himself in thee, thy grace, thy

thy holiness, without coming in to thy help? It is impossible.

Secondly, The Saint's enemy is set out by their unity; fiery darts of the wicked, *of the wicked one*. As if all were shot out of the same bow, and by the same hand. As if the Christian's fight were a single duel with one single enemy. All the legions of Devils, and multitudes of wicked men, make but one great enemy. They are all one mystical body of wickedness; as Christ and his Saints one mystical holy body. One Spirit acts Christ and his Saints; so one Spirit acts Devils, and ungodly men his limbs; the soul is in the little toe; and the spirit of the Devil in the least of sinners. But I have spoke something of this subject elsewhere.

Thirdly, The Saint's enemy is here described by his warlike provision, or weapons he useth in fight against them. *Darts* and those of the worst kind, *fiery darts*.

First, Darts, the Devil's temptations, are the darts he useth against the souls of men and women, and may fitly be so called in a threefold respect.

First, Darts or arrows are swift; thence is our usual expression, *As swift as an arrow from a bow*. Lightning is called God's arrow, because it flies swiftly. Psalm xviii. 14. *He sent out his arrows, and scattered them, he shot out lightning, and discomfited them*, that is, lightning like arrows. Satan's temptations fly like a flash of lightning. He needs no more time than the cast of an eye for the dispatch of a temptation. *David*'s eye did but unawares fall upon *Bathsheba*, and the Devil's arrow was in his heart before he could shut this casement: Thus, when *David*'s servants had told what *Nabal* the churl said, *David*'s choler was presently up; an arrow of revenge wounded him to the heart; what quicker than a thought? yet, how oft is that a temptation to us? one silly thought riseth in a duty, and our hearts are on a sudden carried away, like a spaniel after a bird that springs up before him; yea, if one temptation spreads not, how soon can he send another after it? no sooner one arrow is delivered, but he hath another on the string.

Secondly, Darts, or arrows, fly secretly; and so do temptations.

First, The arrow oft comes afar off; a man may be wounded with a dart, and not see who shot it. The wicked are

are said to *shoot their arrows in secret at the perfect,* Psalm lxiv. 4.; and then, *they say, who shall see them?* Thus Satan lets fly a temptation so secretly, that he is hardly suspected. Sometimes he useth a wife's tongue to do his errand; another while, he gets behind the back of a husband, friend, servant, &c. and is not seen all the while he is doing his work. Who would have thought to have found a devil in *Peter* tempting his Master, or suspected that *Abraham* should be his instrument, to betray his beloved wife into the hands of a sin? yet it was so. Nay, sometimes he is so secret, that he borrows God's bow to shoot his arrows from, and the poor Christian is abused, thinking it is God chides and is angry, when it is the Devil that tempts him to think so, and counterfeits God's voice. *Job* cries out of *the arrows of the Almighty, how the poison of them drank up his spirit, and of the terrors of God, that did set themselves in array against him,* Job vi. 4. when it was Satan all the while that was practising his malice, and playing his pranks upon him, God was friends with this good man, only Satan begged leave (and God gave it for a time) thus to affright him. And poor *Job* cries out, as if God had cast him off, and were become his enemy.

Secondly, Darts, or arrows, make little or no noise as they go; they cut their passage through the air, without telling us by any report (as cannon doth) that they are coming. Thus insensibly doth temptation make its approach; the thief is in before we think to shut the doors. The wind is secret in its motion, of which our saviour saith, *we know not whence it comes, nor whither it goes,* John iii. 8.; yet, *we hear the sound thereof,* as he saith. But temptations many times come and give us no warning by any sound they make. The Devil lays his plot so close, that the soul sees not his drift. As the woman of *Tekoa* told her tale so handsomely, that the king passeth judgment against himself in the person of another before he smelt out the business.

Thirdly, Darts have a wounding killing nature, especially when well headed, and shot out of a strong bow. Such are Satan's temptations, headed with desperate malice, and drawn by a strength no less than angelical; and this against so poor a weak creature as man, that it were impossible, had not God provided good armour, for our soul to outstand Satan's power, and get safe to heaven. Christ would

have us sensible of their force and danger, by that petition in his prayer, which the best of Saints on this side Heaven have need to use; *lead us not into temptation.* Christ was then but newly out of the list; where he had tasted Satan's tempting skill and strength, which, though beneath his wisdom and power to defeat, yet well he knew it was able to worst the strongest of Saints. There was never any besides Christ, that Satan did not foil, more or less. It was Christ's prerogative to be tempted, but not led into temptation. *Job,* one of the chief worthies in God's army of Saints, who from God's mouth is a *none-such*; yet was galled by these arrows shot from Satan's bow, and put to great disorder. God was fain to pluck him out of the Devil's gripe, or else he had been quite worried by that lion.

Secondly, Satan's warlike provision is not only darts, but *fiery darts;* some restrain these fiery darts to some particular kind of temptation, as despair, blasphemy, and those which fill the heart with terror and horror; but this (I conceive) is too strait; because faith is a shield for all kind of temptations, and indeed there is none but may prove a fiery temptation; so that I incline to think, all sorts of temptations to be comprehended here, yet so as to respect some in an especial manner more than others, which afterwards shall be instanced.

Quest. Why are Satan's darts called fiery?

Answ. First, They may be said to be fiery, in regard of that fiery wrath with which Satan shoots them; they are the fire, this dragon spits, full of indignation against God and his Saints *Saul,* it is said, *breathed out threatening and slaughter against the Church,* Acts ix. 1. as one that is inwardly inflamed; his breath is hot; a fiery steam of persecuting wrath came, as out of a burning furnace, from him; temptations are the breathings of the Devil's wrath.

Secondly, Fiery, in regard of the end they lead to, if not quenched, and that is hell fire, there is a spark of hell in every temptation. And all sparks fly to their element, so all temptations tend to hell and damnation, according to Satan's intent and purpose.

Thirdly, And chiefly fiery, in regard of that malignant quality they have on the spirits of men, and that is to kindle a fire in the heart and consciences of poor creatures: The Apostle alludes to the custom of cruel enemies, who used to dip

dip the heads of their arrows in some poison, whereby they became more deadly, and did not only wound the part where they light, but enflame the whole body, which made the cure more difficult. *Job* speaks of *the poison of them which drank up his spirits,* Job vi. 4. they have an envenoming and inflaming quality.

CHAP. XIII.

The fiery nature of Satan's enticing temptations with Faith's power to quench them.

THEY are of two sorts, either those that do pleasingly entice and bewitch with some seeming promises of satisfaction to the creature; or,

Secondly, Such as affright, and carry horror with them; both are fiery, and quenched by faith. We shall begin with the first; such as do pleasingly entice. And the Note is this,

That faith will enable a soul to quench the fire of Satan's most pleasing temptations.

First, We shall shew you, that enticing temptations have a fiery quality in them.

Secondly, That faith is able to quench them.

First, They have an inflaming quality. There is a secret disposition in the heart of all, to all sin; temptation doth not fall on us as a ball of fire on ice or snow, but as a spark on tinder, or lightning on a thatched roof, which presently is on a flame; hence in Scripture, though tempted by Satan, yet the sin is charged on us. James i. 14. *Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lusts, and enticed.* Mark! it is Satan *tempts*, but our own lust *draws us.* The fowler lays the trap, but the bird's own desire betrays it into the net. The heart of man is marvellous, prone to take fire from these darts. *Where no wood is, the fire*

goes out, Prov. xxvi. and does no hurt, thus did they on Christ; there was no combustible matter of corruption in him for Satan to work upon. But our hearts being once heated in *Adam,* could never cool since. A sinner's heart is compared to an oven, Hosea vii. 4. *They are all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker.* The heart of man is the oven, the Devil the baker, and temptation the fire with which he heats it, and then no sin comes amiss: *I dwell,* saith *David,* Psalm 57. *among those that are set on fire;* and I pray who sets them on fire? the Apostle will resolve us, *James* iii. 6. *set on fire of hell.* Oh friends! when once the heart is inflamed by temptation, what strange effects doth it produce? How hard to quench such a fire, though in a gracious person? *David* himself, under the power of a temptation, so apparent, that a carnal eye could see it (*Joab* I mean, who reproved him), yet was hurried to the loss of seventy thousand men's lives, for so much that one sin cost. And if the fire be so raging in *David,* what work will it make, where no water is nigh, no grace in the heart to quench it? Hence the wicked are said *to be mad on their sins,* Jerem. l. 38. spurring on without fear or wit; like a man inflamed with a fever, that takes his head; there is no holding of him in his bed. Thus a soul possessed with the fury of temptation, runs into the mouth of death and hell, and will not be stopped.

Use 1. Oh! how should this make us afraid of running into a temptation, when there is such witchery in it. Some men are too confident, they have so good an opinion of themselves, as if they could not be taken with such a disease; and therefore will breath in any air. It is just with God to let such be shot with one of Satan's darts, to make them know their own hearts better. Who will pity him, whose house is blown up, that kept his powder in the chimney corner? *Am I a dog* (saith *Hazael),* 2 Kings viii. do you make me a beast, sunk so far below the nature of man, as to imbrue my hands in these horrid murders? yet, how soon did this wretch fall into the temptation; and by that one bloody act upon his own leige Lord (which he perpetrated as soon as he got home), shews, that the other evils, which the Prophet foretold of him, were not so improbable as at first he thought. Oh! stand off the Devil's mark, unless you mean to have one of the Devil's arrows in your side; keep as far from

from the whirl of temptation as may be; for if once he get you within his circle, thy head may soon be dizzy. One sin helps to kindle another; the less the greater, *Hosea* vii. 5. When the courtiers had got their king to carouse, and play the drunkard, he soon learned to play the scorner: *The princes have made him sick with bottles of wine, he stretched out his hand with scorners.*

Secondly, Hath Satan's darts such a kindling nature? Take heed of being Satan's instrument, in putting fire to the corruption of another. Some on purpose do it; thus the whore perfumes her bed, paints her face. Idolaters, as whorish as the other, set out their temples and altars with superstitious pictures, embellished with all the cost that gold and silver can afford them, to bewitch the spectators. Hence they are said, *to be inflamed with their idols,* Isaiah lvii. 5. as much as any lover with his minion in her whorish dress. And the drunkard kindles his neighbour's lust, *putting the bottle to him,* Hab. ii. 15. Oh! what base work are these men employed about? By the law it is death for any wilfully to set fire to his neighbour's house: What then deserve they, that set fire to the souls of men, and that no less than hell fire? But it is possible thou mayest do it unawares, by a less matter than thou dreamest on. A child playing with a lighted straw, may set a house on fire, which many men cannot quench. And truly Satan may use thy folly and carelessness, to kindle lust in another's heart. Perhaps an idle light speech drops from thy mouth, and thou meanest no great hurt; but a gust of temptation may carry this spark into thy friend's bosom, and kindle a sad fire there. A wanton attire (perhaps naked breasts and shoulders), which we will suppose thou wearest with a chaste heart, and only because it is the fashion, yet may ensnare another's eye. And if he that kept a pit open but to the hurt of a beast, sinned, how much more thou, who givest occasion to a soul's sin, which is a worse hurt? *Paul would not eat flesh, while the world stood, if it made his brother offend,* 1 Cor. viii. 13. and canst thou doat on a foolish dress, and immodest fashion, whereby many may offend? *The body,* Christ saith, *is better than raiment:* The soul then of thy brother is more to be valued, surely, than an idle fashion of thy raiment.

Secondly,

Secondly, That faith will enable a soul to quench these temptations. This is called our *victory over the world, even our faith*, 1 John v. 4. Faith sets its triumphant banner on the world's head. The same will tell you, what is meant by the world, chap. ii. 15, 16. *Love not the world, for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the father, but of the world.* All that is in the world is said to be *lust*, because it is food and fuel for lust. Now faith enables the soul to quench those darts which Satan dips and envenoms with these worldly lusts; called by some the worldlings Trinity.

First, For the lust of the flesh, under which are comprehended those temptations, that promise pleasure and delight to the flesh; these, indeed, carry fire in the mouth of them; and when they light on a carnal heart, do soon inflame it with unruly passions and beastly affections. The adulterer is said to burn in his lust, *Rom.* i. 27. The drunkard *to be inflamed with his wine*, Isaiah v. 11. no sort of temptation works more strongly than those which present sensual pleasure, and promise delight to the flesh; sinners are said to *work all uncleanness with greediness;* with a kind of covetousness, for the word imports, they never have enough; when the voluptuous person hath wasted his estate, jaded his body in luxury, still the fire burns in his wretched heart; no drink will quench a poisoned man's thirst; nothing but faith can be helpful to a soul in these flames. We find *Dives* in hell burning, and not *a drop of water to cool the tip of his tongue.* The unbelieving sinner is in a hell above ground, he burns in his lust, and not a drop of water (for want of faith) to quench the fire; by faith it is said those glorious *Martyrs*, Heb. xi. *quenched the violence of the fire;* and truly the fire of lust is as hot as the fire of *Martyrdom;* by faith alone this is quenched also, Tit. iii. 3, 4. *We were sometimes foolish, serving divers lusts and pleasures, but after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, before he saved us.* Never could they shake off these lusts, the old companions, till by faith they got a new acquaintance with the grace of God revealed in the gospel.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIV.

How Faith quencheth the lusts of the flesh, lusts of the eye, and pride of life.

SECT. I.

Quest. HOW does faith quench this fiery dart of sensual delights?

Answ. As it undeceives, and takes off the mist from the Christian's eyes, whereby he is now enabled to see sin in its naked being. It gives him the native taste and relish of sin, before the Devil hath sophisticated it with his sugared sauce. And truly, now sin proves a bitter morsel. Faith hath a piercing eye, it is the evidence of things not seen; it looks behind the curtain of sense, and sees sin before its finery was on, to be a brat that comes from hell, and brings hell with it. Now let Satan come if he please, and present a lust never so enticing. The Christian's answer is ready; be not cheated, oh my soul! (saith faith) with a lying spirit. He shews thee a fair *Rachel,* but he intends thee a blear-eyed *Leah;* he promises joy, but he will pay thee sorrow. The clothes that make this lust so comely, are not its own. The sweetness thou tastest is not native, but borrowed to deceive thee withal. Thou art *Saul* (said the woman of *Endor), why hast thou deceived me.* Thus faith can call sin and Satan by their own names, when they come in disguise; thou art Satan, saith faith, why wouldst thou deceive me? God hath said, sin is bitter as gall and wormwood, and wouldst thou make me believe I can gather the sweet fruits of true delight from this root of bitterness, grapes from these thorns?

Secondly, Faith doth not only enable the soul to see the nature of sin, but also how transcient its false pleasures are. I will not lose, saith faith, sure mercies for transcient uncertain pleasures. This made *Moses* leap out of the pleasures of

of the *Egyptian* court into the fire of affliction, *Heb.* xi. 25. because he saw them *pleasures for a season.* Should you see a man in a ship throw himself over-board into the sea, you might at first think him out of his wits; but if a little while after you should see him stand safe on the shore, and the ship swallowed up by the waves, you would then think he took the wisest course. Faith sees the world, and all the pleasures of sin sinking; there is a leak in them which the wit of man cannot stop. Now, is it not better to swim by faith through a sea of trouble, and get safe to heaven at last, than to sit in the lap of sinful plasures, till we drown in hell's gulf?

First, Because it is not natural. Whatever is not natural, soon decays: The nature of sugar is to be sweet, and therefore it holds its sweetness; but sweeten beer or wine never so much, in a few days they will lose their sweetness, The pleasure of sin is extrinsical to its nature, and therefore will corrupt. None of that sweetness, which now bewitches sinners, will be tasted in hell. The sinner shall have his cup spiced there, by his hand that will have it a bitter draught.

Secondly, The pleasures of sin must needs be short, because life cannot be long, and they both end together. Indeed many times the pleasure of sin dies before the man; sinners live to bury their joy in this world. The worm breeds in their conscience, before it breeds in their flesh by death. But be sure, the pleasure of sin never survives this world. The word is gone out of God's mouth, every sinner shall *lie down in sorrow, and wake in sorrow;* hell is too hot a climate for wanton delights to live in. Now faith is a provident grace, and makes the soul bethink itself how it may live in another world; whereas the carnal heart is all for present; his snout is in the trough, and while his draught lasts, he thinks it will never end. But faith hath a large stride, at one pace it can reach over a whole life of years, and see them done while they are but beginning. *I have seen an end of all perfection, saith David;* he saw the wicked when growing on their bed of pleasure, cut down, and burning in God's oven, as if it were done already, *Psalm* xxxvii. 2. And faith will do the like for every Christian, according to its strength and activity. And who would

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envy the condemned man his feast, which he hath in his way to the gallows?

Thirdly, Faith out-vies Satan's proffers, by shewing the soul where choicer enjoyments are to be had at a cheaper rate. Indeed, *best, is best cheap.* Who will not go to that shop where he may be best served? This law holds in force among sinners themselves. The drunkard goes where he may have the best wine; the glutton, where he may have the best chear. Now faith presents such enjoyments to the soul, that are beyond all compare best; it leads to the promise, and entertains it there, at Christ's cost, with all the rich dainties of the gospel; not a dish that the Saints feed on in heaven, but faith can set it before the soul, and give it (though not a full meal) yet such a taste as shall melt it in joy unspeakable and full of glory. This sure must needs quench the temptation. When Satan sends to invite the Christian to his gross fare, will not the soul say, Should I forsake those pleasures that cheared, yea, ravish my heart, to go and debase myself with sin-polluted bread, where I shall be but a fellow-commoner with the beast (who shares in sensual pleasures with man), yea, become worse than the beast; a Devil, like *Judas*, who arose from his Master's table, to sit at the Devil's?

SECT. II.

The lusts of the eye are quenched by faith; by the lust of the eye, the Apostle means those temptations which are drawn from the world's pelf and treasure; called so,

First, Because it is the eye that commits adultery with these things; as the unclean eye looks upon another man's wife, so the covetous eye looks on another's wealth to lust after it.

Secondly, Because all the good that in a manner is received from them, is but to please the eye, Eccles. v. 11. *What good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding them with their eyes?* That is, if a man hath but enough to pay his daily expences, the surplus serves only for the eye to play the wanton with; yet we see how pleasing they are to a carnal heart. It is rare to find a man that will not stoop, by base and sordid practices, to take up this golden

apple. When I consider what sad effects this temptation had on *Ahab*, who, to gain a spot of ground of a few acres (that could not add much to a king's revenues), durst swim to it in the owner's blood. I wonder not to see men, whose condition is necessitous, nibbling at the hook of temptation, where the bait is a far greater worldly advantage. This is the door the Devil entered into *Judas* by; this was the break-neck of *Demas*'s faith, *he embraced this present world.* Now faith will quench a temptation edged with these.

First, Faith persuades the soul of God's fatherly care and providence over it. And where this breast-work is raised, the soul is safe, so long as it keeps within its line. Oh! saith Satan, if thou wouldst but venture on a lie, make bold a little with God in such a command, this wedge of gold is thine, and that advantage will accrue to thy estate. Now faith will teach the soul to reply; I am well provided for already; Satan, I need not thy pension; why should I play the thief for that, which, if good, God hath promised to give? Heb. xiii. 5. *Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have, for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.* How canst thou want, oh my soul, that by the promise hast command of God's purse? Let him that is without God in the world, shift by his wits; do thou live by thy faith.

Secondly, Faith teaches the soul, that the creature's comfort and content comes not from abundance, but God's blessing: And to gain the world by a sin, is not the road that leads to God's blessing, Prov. xxviii. 20. *A faithful man abounds with blessings; but he that maketh haste to be rich, shall not be innocent.* Shouldst thou (saith faith) heap up the world's goods in an evil way, thou art never the nearer to the content thou expectest; it is hard to steal one's meat, and then crave a blessing on it at God's hands. What thou get by sin, Satan cannot give thee quiet possession of, nor discharge those suits, which God will surely commence against thee.

Thirdly, Faith advanceth the soul to higher projects, than to seek the things of this life. It discovers a world beyond. And there lies faith's merchandise; leaving the men of this world to load themselves with clay, while it trades for grace and glory. *Saul* did not more willingly leave seeking his father's asses, when he heard of a kingdom, than the believing

ing soul leaves prouling for the earth, now it hears of Christ and heaven, *Psalm* xxxix. 6, 7. *Verse the sixth,* we find holy *David* branding the men of the world for folly, that they troubled themselves so much for naught; *surely,* (saith he) *they are disquieted in vain, he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them;* and *ver.* 7. we have him with a holy disdain, turning his back upon the world, *and now Lord, what wait I for?* As if he had said, is this the portion I could be content with? to set upon a greater heap of riches than my neighbour hath? *My hope is in thee, deliver me from all my transgressions,* ver. 8. Let them that love the world, take the world; but Lord, pay not my portion in gold or silver, but in pardon of sin. *Abraham,* by faith, had so low an esteem of this world's treasure, that he left his own country to live here a stranger, in hope of a better, *Heb.* xi.

SECT. III.

The third lust of the world, *The pride of life* There is an itch of pride in man's heart after the gaudy honours of the world. And this itch of man's proud flesh, the Devil labours to scratch and irritate by suitable proffers. And when the temptation without, and lust within meet, then it works to purpose; *Balaam* loved the way that led to court, and therefore spurs on his conscience. The Jews, when convinced of Christ's person and doctrine, were such slaves to their honour and credit, that they part with Christ, rather than hazard that, John xii. 43. *For they love the praise of men, more than the praise of God.* Now faith quenches this temptation, and with a holy scorn disdains all the preferment the world hath to heap on him, Heb. xi. 24. *By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharoah's daughter* Though by his adoption, he might have been heir to the crown; yet this he threw at his heels. It is not said, he did not seek to be the son of *Pharoah's* daughter, though that would have sounded a high commendation, having so fair an opportunity; some would not have scrupled a little court-flattery, thereby to have got themselves into further favour, but he refused to be called; honour came in upon him, as water at a flowing

tide. Now, to stand against this flood of preferment, and no breach made in his heart, was admirable indeed. Nay, he did not refuse this preferment for any principality that he hoped for elsewhere. He forsook not one court to go to another, but to join with a beggarly reproached people; yea, by rejecting their favour, he incurred the wrath of the king, yet faith carried him through all those heights and depths of favour and disgrace, honour and dishonour: And, truly, wherever this grace is (allowing for its strength and weakness), it will do the like; we find, ver. 33. in the same chapter, how *Samuel and the Prophets, through faith subdued kingdoms;* which sure is not only meant of the conquest of the sword (though some of them performed honourable achievements that way), but also by despising the honour and preferments of them. This indeed many of the Prophets are famous for; and in particular *Samuel*, who, at God's command, gave away a kingdom from his own house and family, by anointing *Saul*, though himself at present had possession of the chief Magistrate's chair. And others, ver. 37. we read, *were tempted;* that is, (when ready to suffer), were offered great preferments, if they would bend to the times, by receding a little from the bold profession of their faith: but they chose rather the flames of martyrdom, than the favour of princes on those terms.

But more particularly how faith quenches this temptation.

First, Faith takes away the fuel that feeds this temptation; withdraw the oil, and the lamp goes out. Now that which is fuel to this temptation, is pride; where this lust is strong, no wonder the creature's eyes are dazzled with the sight of that which suits the desires of his heart. The Devil now, by a temptation, does but broach, and so give vent to what the heart itself is full with. *Simon Magus* had a haughty spirit, he would be *Simon*, some great man, and, therefore, when he did but think an opportunity was offered to mount him up the stage, he is all on fire, with a desire of having a gift to work miracles, that he offers to play the huckster with the Apostle. Whereas an humble spirit loves a low seat, is not ambitious to stand high in the thoughts of others, and so, while he stoops in his own opinion of himself, the bullet flies over his head, which hits the proud man on the breast. Now it is faith lays the heart low. Pride and faith

faith are opposed, like two buckets, if one goes up, the other goes down in the soul, Hab. ii. 4. *Behold, his soul that is lifted up, is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith.*

Secondly, Faith is Christ's favourite; and so makes the Christian expect all his honour from him: Indeed, it is one of the prime acts of faith, to cast the soul on God in Christ, as all-sufficient to make it completely happy. And, therefore, when a temptation comes, soul, thou mayest raise thyself in the world, to this place, or that esteem, if thou wilt but dissemble thy profession, or allow thyself in such a sin. Now faith says, Remember whose thou art, oh my soul! hast thou not taken God for thy Lord, and wilt thou accept preferment from another's hand? Princes will not suffer their courtiers to become pensioners to a foreign prince, least of all to a prince in hostility to them. Now, saith faith, the honour thou get by sin, makes thee pensioner to the Devil himself, who is the greatest enemy God hath.

Thirdly, Faith shews the danger of such a bargain, should a Christian gain the glory of the world for one sin.

First, Saith faith, hadst thou the whole world's empire, with all bowing before thee, this would not add to thy stature one cubit in the eye of God. But thy sin, which thou payest for the purchase, blots thy name in his thoughts, yea, makes thee odious in his sight. God must first be out of love with himself, before he can love a sinner as such.

Secondly, Saith faith, the world's pomp and glory cannot satisfy thee; it may kindle thirstings in thy soul, but quench none; it will beget a thousand cares and fears, but quiet none. But thy sin that procures these, hath a power to torment thy soul.

Thirdly, When thou hast the world's crown on thy head, how long shalt thou wear it? They are sick at *Rome*, and die in prince's courts, as well as at the spittal; yea, kings themselves are put as naked to their beds of dust as others. In that day all thy thoughts will perish with thee: But the guilt of thy sin, which was the ladder by which thou didst climb up the hill of honour, will dog thee into another world. These, and such like, are the considerations by which faith breaks off the bargain.

Fourthly, Faith presents the Christian with the exploits of former Saints, who have renounced the world's honour and

and applause, rather than defile their consciences, and prostitute their souls to be defloured by the least sin. Great *Tamerlane* carried the lives of his ancestors into the field with him, in which he read before he gave battle, that he might be stirred up not to stain the blood of his family by cowardice, or any unworthy behaviour in fight. Thus faith peruses the roll of Scripture-saints, and the exploits of their faith over the world, that the Christian may be excited to the same gallantry of spirit. This was plainly the Apostle's design, in recording those worthies, with the trophies of their faith, *Heb.* xi. that some of their nobleness might steal into our hearts while we are reading them, as appears, chap. xii. 1. *Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that does so easily beset us.* Oh! what courage does it put into the soldier, to see some before him to run upon the face of death? *Elisha* having seen the miracles God wrought by *Elijah*, smites the waters of *Jordan* with his mantle, saying, *Where is the Lord God of Elijah? and they parted*; 2 Kings ii. 14. Thus faith makes use of the exploits of former Saints, and turns them into prayer. Oh! where is the Lord God of *Abraham, Moses, Samuel,* and those other worthies, who by faith have trampled on the world's pomp, subdued temptations, stopt the mouths of lion-like lusts? Art not thou, O God, the God of the vallies, the meanest Saints, as well as of the mountains, more eminent heroes? Do not the same blood and spirits run in the veins of all believers? Were they victorious, and shall I be the only slave, and of so prostrate a spirit, like *Issachar*, to couch under my burthen of corruption without shaking it off? Help me, Oh my God, that I may be avenged of these mine enemies. And it will also plead with the Christian himself. Awake, saith faith, Oh my soul, and prove thyself a-kin to these holy men, that thou art born of God as they were, by thy victory over the world.

CHAP. XV.

Sheweth the difference between Faith's conquest over the world, by quenching the fiery darts shot from it; and that victory which some of the better Heathens attained to: As also a trial of our faith propounded, by this power to quench Satan's enticing temptations, more or less.

BUT some may say, if this be all faith enables to, this is no more than some Heathens have done. They have trampled on the profits, pleasures of this world, who never knew what faith meant.

Indeed, many of them have done so much by their moral principles, as may make some (who would willingly pass for believers) ashamed, to be out-done by them who shot in so weak a bow. Yet it will appear, that there is a victory of faith which, in the true believer, out-shoots them more than their moral conquest doth the debauched conversations of looser Christians.

Faith quenches the lust of the heart.

First, Those very embers of corruption, which are so secretly raked up in the inclination of the soul, find the force and power of faith to quench them. *Faith purifies the heart,* Acts xv. 9. Now, none of their conquests reach the heart. Their longest ladder was too short to reach the walls of this castle; they swept the door, trimmed a few outward rooms; but the seat and sink of all (in the corruption of man's nature) was never cleansed by them; so that the fire of lust was rather pent in than put out. How is it possible that could be cleansed, the filthiness of which was never known to them? Alas! they never looked so near themselves to find that enemy within them, which they thought was without. Thus while they laboured to keep the thief out, he was within, and they knew it not; for they did either proudly think, that the soul was naturally endued with principles of virtue, or vainly imagine it to be but an *abrasa tabula, white paper,*

paper, on which they might write good or evil as they pleased. Thus you see the seat of their war was in the world without them, which after some sort they conquered. But the lust within remained untouched, because a *terra incognita* to them. It is faith from the word that first discovers this.

Secondly, Faith's victory is uniform; sin in Scripture is called *a body*, Rom. vi. 6. because made up of several members, or as the body of an army, consisting of many troops and regiments: It is one thing to beat a troop, or put a wing of an army to flight, and another thing to rout and break the whole army. Something hath been done by moral principles like the former; they have got some petty victory, and had the chase of some more gross and exterior sins; but then they were fearfully beaten by some other of sins troops. When they seemed to triumph over the lust of the flesh, and eye the world's profits and pleasures, they were at the same time slaves to the pride of life, mere *gloriæ animalia*, kept in chains by the credit and applause of the world. As the sea (which they say) loses as much in one place of the land, as it gains in another; so what they got in a seeming victory over one sin, they lost again by being in bondage to another, and that a worse, because more spiritual. But now faith is uniform, and routs the whole body of sin, that not one single lust stands in its unbroken strength. *Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace*, Rom. vi. 14. that is no sin; it may stir like a wounded soldier on his knees, it may rally like broken troops, but never be long master of the field where true faith is.

Thirdly, Faith enables the soul, not only to quench these lusts, but the temptation being quenched, it enables him to use the world itself against Satan, and so beat him with his own weapon, by striking his own cudgels to his head. Faith quenches the fire of Satan's darts, and then shoots them back on him. This it doth, by reducing all the enjoyments of the world which the Christian is possessed of, into a subordination for the glory of God. Some of the Heathens' admired champions, to cure the lust of the eye, have plucked them out; to shew the contempt of riches, have thrown their money into the sea; to conquer the world's honour and applause, have sequestered themselves from all company. Shall

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we call this a victory, or rather a phrensy. But faith enables for a nobler conquest. Indeed, when God calls for any of these enjoyments, faith can lay all at Christ's feet; but while God allows them, faith's skill and power is in correcting the windiness and flatulent nature of them, so that, what on a naughty heart rots and corrupts, by faith turns to good nourishment in a gracious soul. If a house were on fire, which would you count the wiser man? he that goes to quench it, by pulling the house down, or he, that by throwing good store of water on it, doth this as fully, and leaves the house standing for your use? The Heathen, and some superstitious persons, think to mortify, by taking away what God gives us leave to use; but faith puts out the fire of lust in the heart, and leaves the creature to be improved for God's glory, and enjoyed to the Christian's comfort.

First, This may be a touch-stone for our faith. Is thy faith a temptation-quenching faith? Many say, they believe; yes, that they do! They thank God they are not infidels. Well, what exploits canst thou do with thy faith? Is it able to defend thee in a day of battle, and cover thy soul in safety, when Satan's darts fly thick about thee? or is it such a sorry shield, that lets every arrow of temptation pierce thy heart through it? Thou believest, but still as very a slave to thy lust as ever; when a good fellow calls thee out to a drunken meeting, thy faith cannot keep thee out of the snare, but away thou goest, as a fool to the stocks. If Satan tells thee thou mayest advantage thy estate by a lie, or cheat in thy shop, thy faith stands very tamely by, and makes no resistance. In a word, thou hast faith, and yet drivest a trade of sin in the very face of it. Oh! God forbid, that any should be under so great a delusion, to carry such a lie in their hand, and think it a saving faith. Will this faith ever carry thee to heaven, that is not able to bring thee out of hell? for there thou livest, while under the power of thy lust. *Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and come and stand before me?* Jer. vii. 1. If this be faith, well-fare the honest Heathens, who escaped these gross pollutions of the world, which you, like beasts, with your faith lie wallowing in. I had rather be a sober Heathen, than a drunken Christian; a chaste Heathen, than an unclean believer. Oh! venture not the life of your souls with such a paper-shield; come to him for a faith, that

is the faith-maker; he will help thee to a faith, that shall quench the very fire of hell itself, though kindled in thy bosom, and divide the waves of thy lust, in which now thou art drowned (as once he did the sea for *Israel)* that thou shalt go on dry land to heaven, and thy lusts not be able to knock off the wheels of thy chariot. But if thou attemptest this with thy false faith, the *Egyptians'* end will be thine, Heb. xi. 29. *By faith they passed through the Red Sea, as by dry land, which the Egyptians assailing to do, were drowned.* Though true faith gets safely through the depths of temptation, yet false faith will drown by the way. But, perhaps, thou canst tell us better news than this, and give us better evidence for the truth of thy faith. Let us, therefore, hear what singular thing hath been done by thee since a believer. The time was, thou wert as weak as water; every blast of temptation blew thee down; thou wert carried as a dead fish with the stream; but canst thou say, since thou hast been acquainted with Christ, thou art endued with a power to repel those temptations, which before held thy heart in perfect obedience to their commands? Canst thou now be content to bring thy lusts, which once were of great price with thee (as those believers did their conjuring books), *Acts* xix. 19. and throw them into the fire of God's love in Christ to thy soul, there to consume them? Possibly thou hast not them at present under thy foot in a full conquest, yet have they begun to fall in thy thoughts, and is thy countenance changed towards them to what it was? be of good comfort, this is enough to prove thy faith of the royal race. *When Christ comes* (said the convinced *Jews) will he do more miracles than these, which this man hath done,* John vii. 31.? And when Christ comes by faith into the heart, will he do greater works than these thy faith hath done?

CHAP.

CHAP. XVI.

An Objection against believing, answered: And some directions how to use this shield to quench inticing temptations.

THIS helps to answer that objection, by which many poor souls are discouraged from believing, and closing with the promise. Oh! saith the tempted soul, ye bid me believe: Alas! how dare I, when I cannot get victory of such a lust, and am overcome by such a temptation? what have such as I to do with a promise? See here this *Goliah* prostrated: Thou art not to believe because thou art victorious; but that thou mayest be victorious. The reason why thou art so worsted by thy enemy, is for want of faith: *If you believe not, surely you shall not be established,* Isaiah vii. 9. wouldst thou be cured before thou goest to the physician? That sounds harsh to thy own reason, and is as if thou shouldst say, thou wilt not go to the physician till thou hast no need of him. No, go and touch Christ by faith, that virtue may flow from him to thy soul; thou must not think to eat the fruit before thou plantest the tree. Victory over corruption is a sweet fruit; but found growing only upon faith's branches. Satan does by thee as *Saul* did by the *Israelites;* who weakened their hands in battle by keeping them fasting. Up and eat (Christian) a full meal on the promise; if thou wouldst find thy eyes enlightened, and thy hands strengthened for the combat with thy lusts. It is one part of the doctrine of devils, which we read of, 1 Tim. 4. *To forbid meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving.* But the grand doctrine of the Devil, which above all he would promote, is to keep poor trembling souls from feeding by faith on the Lord Jesus, as if Christ were some forbidden fruit; whereas God hath appointed him above all others, that he should be received with thanksgiving of all humble sinners. And, therefore, in the name of God, I invite you to this feast. Oh! let not your souls (who see

your need of Christ, and are pinched at your very heart for want of him) be lean from day to day, through your unbelief: But come eat, and your souls shall live. Never was child more welcome to his father's table, than thou art to Christ's; and that feast which stands on the gospel-board.

Thirdly, Make use of faith, oh ye Saints, as for other ends and purposes, so particularly for this, of quenching this kind of fiery darts. It is not the having a shield, but the holding and wielding it, that defends the Christian. Let not Satan take thee with thy faith out of thy hand, as *David* did *Saul* in the cave, with his spear sticking in the ground, which should have been in his hand.

Quest. But how would you have me use my shield of faith for my defence against these fiery darts of Satan's inticing temptations?

Answ. By faith engage God to come in to thy succour against them. Now, there are three engaging acts of faith, which will bind God (as we may so say with reverence) to help thee, because he binds himself to help such.

The first is the prayerful act of faith. Open thy case to God in prayer, and call in help from heaven. As the governor of a besieged castle would send a secret messenger to his general or prince to let him know his state and straits. The Apostle, *James* iv. 2. saith, *Ye fight and war, yet you have not, because ye ask not.* Our victory must drop from heaven if we have any; but it stays till prayer comes for it. Though God had a purpose to deliver *Israel* out of *Egypt*, yet no news of his coming, till the groans of his people rang in his ears. This gave heaven the alarm, Exod. ii. 24. *Their cry came up unto God, and he heard their groaning, and remembered his covenant.* Now, the more to prevail upon God in this act of faith, fortify thy prayer with those strong reasons which Saints have used in like cases.

First, Engage God from his promise, when thou prayest against any sin; shew God his own hand in such promises as these. *Sin shall not have dominion over you,* Rom. vi. *He will subdue our iniquities under,* Micah vii. Prayer is nothing but the promise reversed, or God's word formed into an argument, and retorted by faith upon God again. Know, Christian, thou hast law on thy side, bills and bonds must be paid, *Psalm* cxix. 36. *David* is there praying against the sins of a wanton eye and a dead heart; *Turn away*

mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou me in thy way; and see how he urgeth his argument in the next words, *Establish thy word unto thy servant.* A good man is as good as his word, and will not a good God? But where finds *David* such a word for help against these sins? surely in the covenant, it is in the *Magna Charta.* The first promise held forth thus much, *The seed of the woman shall bruise the Serpent's head.*

Secondly, Plead with God from relation. Art thou one God hath taken into his family? Oh! what an argument hast thou here: *I am thine, Lord save me,* saith *David.* Who will look after the child, if the father will not? Is it for thy honour, oh God, that any child of thine should be a slave to sin? *Be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name; order my steps in thy word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me,* Psalm cxix. 132.

Thirdly, Engage God from his Son's bloody death to help thee against thy lusts, that were his murderers: What died Christ for, but to *redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people?* Titus ii. 14. And shall not Christ be re-imbursed of what he laid out? Shall he not have the price of his blood, and purchase of his death? In a word, what is Christ's praying for in heaven, but what was in his mouth when praying on earth? that his *Father would sanctify them, and keep them from the evil of the world.* Thou comest in good time to beg that of God, which thou findest Christ hath asked for thee.

A second way to engage God, is by faith's expecting act; when thou hast been with God, expect good from God. *I will direct my prayer to thee, and will look up,* Psalm v. 3. for want of this, many a prayer is lost. If you do not believe, why do you pray? and if you believe, why do you not expect? by praying you seem to depend on God; by not expecting, you again renounce your confidence. What is this, but to take his name in vain. Oh! Christian, stand to your prayer in a holy expectation of what you have begged upon the credit of the promise, and you cannot miss of the ruin of your lusts.

Quest. O! but saith the poor soul, shall not I presume to expect, when I have prayed against my corruptions, that God will bestow so great a mercy on me as this is?

Answ.

Answ. First, Dost thou know what it is to presume? He presumes that takes a thing before it is granted. He were a presumptuous man indeed, that should take your meat off your table, who never was invited: But I hope your guest is not over-bold, that ventures to eat of what you set before him. For one to break into your house, upon whom you shut the door, were presumptuous; but to come out of a storm into your house, when you are so kind as to call him in, is no presumption, but good manners. And if God opens not the door of his promise to be a sanctuary unto poor humbled sinners, flying from the rage of their lust; truly then I know none on this side heaven that can expect welcome. God hath promised to be a king, a law-giver to his people: Now, it is no presumption in subjects to come under their prince's shadow, and expect protection from them, *Isaiah* xxxiii. 21, 22. God there promiseth, *he will be a place of broad waters and streams, wherein no galley shall go with oars, neither shall gallant ships pass thereby. For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our law-giver, the Lord is our king, he will save us.* God speaks to his people, as a prince or a state would to their subjects. He will secure them in their traffic and merchandise. Now soul, thou art molested with many lusts that infest thee, and obstruct thy commerce with heaven; yea, thou hast complained to thy God, what loss thou hast suffered by them; is it now presumption to expect relief from him, that he will rescue thee from them, that thou mayest serve him without fear who is thy leige Lord?

Secondly, You have the Saints for your precedents: Who when they have been in combat with their corruptions; yea, been foiled by them, have even then acted their faith on God, and expected the ruin of those enemies, which for the present have over-run them, Psalm lxv. 3. *Iniquities prevail against me* (he means his own sins), but see his faith; at the same time that they prevailed over him, he beholds God destroying them; as appears in the very next word, *As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.* See here, poor Christian, who thinkest that thou shalt never get above deck. Holy *David* has a faith, not only for himself, but also all believers (of whose number I suppose thee one), *As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.* And mark the ground he hath for this his confidence, *Verse* 4. taken from God's choosing act: *Blessed is the man whom thou chusest, and*

and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts. As if he had said, surely he will not let them be under the power of sin, or want of his gracious succour, whom he sets so nigh himself. This is Christ's own argument against Satan in the behalf of his people. *The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan, even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem, rebuke thee,* Zech. iii. 2.

Thirdly, Thou hast encouragement for this expecting act of faith, from what God already hath enabled thee to do. Thou canst (if a believer indeed) through mercy say, that sin is not in that strength within thy soul, as it was before thy acquaintance with Christ, his word and ways. Though thou art not what thou wouldest be; yet thou art not what thou hast been. There was a time when sin played *Rex* in thy heart without controul. Thou didst go to sin as a ship to sea, before wind and tide; thou didst spread thy affections to receive the gale of temptation: But now the tide is turned, and runs against those motions, though weakly, yet thou findest a secret wrestling with them, and God seasonably succouring thee, so that Satan hath not all his will on thee. Well, here is a sweet beginning, and, let me tell thee, this promiseth thee a readiness in God to perfect the victory; yea, God would have thy faith improve this into a confidence for a total deliverance. *Moses,* when he slew the *Egyptian, supposed his brethren would have understood how that God would deliver them,* Acts vii. 25. O! it is a bad improvement of the succours God gives us, to argue from them to unbelief: *He smote the rock, that the waters gushed out; but can he give bread also?* He broke my heart (saith the poor creature) when it was a rock, and brought me home when I was walking in the pride of my heart against him: But can he give bread to nourish my weak grace? I am out of *Egypt*; but can he master those giants in iron chariots, that stand betwixt me and *Canaan?* he helped me in such a temptation, but what shall I do in the next? Oh! do not grieve a good God with these heart-aching questions. You have the former rain, why should you question the latter? *Benjamin* was a good pawn to make old *Jacob* willing to go himself to *Egypt*. The grace which God hath already enriched thee with, is a sure pledge that more is coming to it.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, The expecting act of faith must produce an endeavouring act to set the soul on work, in the confidence of that succour it expects from God. When *Jehoshaphat* had prayed, and established his faith on the good word of promise, then he takes the field, and marches out under this victorious banner against his enemies, 2 *Chron.* xx. Go, Christian, do as he did: What *David* gave in counsel to his son *Solomon*, that give I to thee, 1 *Chron.* xxii. 16. *Arise, and be doing, and the Lord be with thee.* That faith which sets thee on work for God, against thy sin as his enemies, will undoubtedly set God on work for thee against them as thine. The *Lepers* in the gospel were cured, not sitting still, but walking, Luke xvii. 14. *It came to pass, that as they went, they were cleansed.* They met their cure in an act of obedience to Christ's command, the promise saith, *Sin shall not have dominion over you;* the command bids, *Mortify your earthly members;* go thou, and make a valiant attempt against thy lusts, upon this word of command; and in doing thy duty, thou shalt find the performance of the promise. The reason of so many fruitless complaints among Christians, concerning the power of their corruptions, is, either they endeavour without acting faith on the promise, and such indeed go at their own peril, like those bold men, *Numb.* xiv. 40. who *presumptuously went up the hill to fight the Canaanites*, though *Moses* told them, *the Lord was not among them,* Thus slighting the conduct of *Moses*, their Leader, as if they needed not his help to the victory; a clear resemblance of those who go in their own strength to resist their corruptions, and so fall before them, or else they pretend to believe their faith doth not set them on a vigorous endeavour. They use faith as an eye, but not as an hand; they look for victory to drop from heaven upon their heads, but do not fight to obtain it: This is a mere fanciful faith; he that believes God for the event, believes him for the means also; if the patient dare trust the physician for his cure, he dare also follow his prescription in order to it: And, therefore, Christian, sit not still, and say thy sins shall fall, but put thyself in array against them: God who hath promised thee victory, calls thee to thy arms, and means to use thy own hands in the battle, if ever thou gettest it: *Get thee up* (said the *Lord* to *Joshua*), *wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?* Josh. vii. 10. God liked the

the prayer and moan he made very well; but there was something else for him to do, besides praying and weeping, before the Amorites could be overcome: And so there is for thee, Christian, with thy faith, besides praying and expecting thy lusts down, and that is searching narrowly into thy heart, whether there be not some neglect on thy part as an *Achan*, for which thou art so worsted by sin, and fleest before the face of every temptation.

CHAP. XVII.

Of the second sort of temptations that are more affrighting, and how Faith quencheth these darts in particular temptations to Atheism, which is overcome not by reason, but by Faith.

HAVING thus dispatched the first kind of fiery darts, temptations, which are inticing and alluring. We now proceed to the second kind, such as are of an affrighting nature, by which Satan would dismay the Christian; and my task is still the same, to shew the power of faith in quenching these fiery darts.

SECT. I.

That faith, and only faith, can quench the fiery darts of Satan's affrighting temptations. This sort of fiery darts is our enemy's reserve; when the other proves unsuccessful, then he opens this quiver, and sends a shower of these arrows to set the soul on flame, if not of sin, yet of terror and horror; when he cannot carry a soul laughing to hell, through the witchery of pleasing temptations, he will endeavour to make him go mourning to heaven, by amazing him with the other. And truly, it is not the least support to a soul exercised with these, to consider, they are a good

sign, that Satan is hard put to it, when these arrows are upon his string. You know an enemy that keeps a castle, will preserve it as long as he can hold it, but when he sees he must quit, he sets it on fire to render it, if possible, useless to them that come after him; while the strong man can keep his house under his own power, he labours to keep it in peace; he quenches those fire-balls of conviction that the spirit is often shooting into the conscience: But when he perceives it is no longer tenable, the mutiny within increases, and there is a secret whisper in the soul of yielding unto Christ; now he labours to set the soul on fire, by his affrighting temptations; much more doth he labour to do it, when Christ hath got the castle out of his hands, and keeps it by the power of his grace. It is very observable, that all the darts shot against *Job* were of this sort; he hardly made any use of the other, when God gave him leave to practice his skill: Why did he not tempt him with some golden apple of profit or pleasure, or such-like inticing temptations? Surely, the high testimony God gave to this his eminent servant, discouraged Satan from this method; yea, no doubt, he had tried *Job*'s manhood before this as to those, and found him too hard; so that now he had no other way left probable to attain his design but this.

I shall content myself with three instances of this sort of fiery darts, shewing how faith quenches them all. Temptations to Atheism, Blasphemy, and Despair.

SECT. II.

The first is, his temptation to Atheism, which, for the horrid nature thereof, may well be called a fiery dart; partly, because by this he makes so bold an attempt, striking at the being of God himself; as also, because of the consternation he produceth in a gracious soul wounded with it. It is true, the Devil, who cannot himself turn Atheist, is much less able to make a child of God an Atheist, who hath not only, in common with other men, an indelible stamp of a Deity in his conscience, but such a sculpture of the divine nature in his heart, as irresistibly demonstrates a God; yea, lively represents a holy God, whose image it is;

so

so that it is impossible a holy heart should be fully overcome with this temptation, having an argument beyond all the world of wicked men, and devils themselves, to prove a Deity, *viz.* a new nature in him, *created after God in righteousness and true holiness;* by which, even when he is buffeted with atheistical injections, he saith in his heart there is a God, though Satan in the paroxysm of the temptation, clouds his reasoning faculty for the present with this smoke of hell, which doth more offend and affright, than persuade his gracious heart to espouse such a principle, as it doth in a wicked man; who, when on the contrary he is urged by his conscience to believe on God, *saith in his heart there is no God;* that is, he wisheth there were none. And this may exceedingly comfort a Saint (who, notwithstanding such injections to Atheism, clings about God in his affections, and dares not for a world allow himself to sin against him; no, not when most opprest with this temptation), that he shall not pass for an Atheist in God's account, whatever Satan makes him believe; as the wicked shall not be cleared from Atheism by their naked profession of a Deity, so long as those thoughts of God are so loose and weak, as not to command them into any obedience to his commands, Psalm xxxvi. 1. *The transgression of the wicked, saith in mine heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.* The holy Prophet argues from the wickedness of the sinner's life, to the atheism of his heart; so, on the contrary, the holy life of a gracious person, saith in mine heart, that the fear of God is before his eye: It appears plainly, that he believes a God, and reveres that God whom he believes to be. Well, though a gracious heart can never be overcome, yet he may be sadly disquieted with it.

Now, in the next place, I am to shew you, how the Christian may quench this fiery dart, and that is by faith alone.

Quest. But what need of faith; will not reason serve the turn to stop the Devil's mouth in this point? cannot the eye of reason spy a Deity except it look through the spectacles of faith?

Answ. I grant that this is a piece of natural divinity, and reason is able to demonstrate the being of a God; where the Scriptures never came, a Deity is acknowledged, Micah iv. 5. *All people will walk, every one in the name of his God:* Where it is supposed, that every nation owns some Deity,

and hath a worship for that God they own; yet in a furious assault of temptation, it is faith alone that is able to keep the field, and quench the fire of this dart.

First, That light which reason affords, is duskish and confused, serving for little more than in general to shew there is a God: It will never tell who, or what this God is. Till *Paul* brought the *Athenians* acquainted with the true God, how little of this first principle in religion was known among them, though that city was then the very eye of the world for learning. And if the world's eye was so dark, as not to know the God they worshipped, what then was the world's darkness itself? Those barbarous places, which wanted all tillage and culture of humane literature, to advance and perfect their understandings. This is a Scripture notion, and so is the object of faith, rather than reason, Heb. xi. 6. *He that comes to God, must believe that he is.* Mark that, *he must believe:* Now faith goes upon the credit of the word, and takes all upon trust from its authority: *He must believe that he is;* which, as Master *Perkins*' on the place saith, is not nakedly to know there is a God, *but to know God to be God*; which reason of itself can never do; such is the blindness and corruption of our nature, that we have very deformed and misshapen thoughts of him, till with the eye of faith, we see his face in the glass of the word, and therefore the same learned man affirms, that all men, whoever came of *Adam* (Christ alone excepted) are by nature Atheists; because, at the same time that they acknowledge a God, they deny him his power, presence, and justice, and allow him to be only what pleaseth themselves. Indeed, it is natural for every man to desire to accommodate his lusts with such conceptions of God, as may be most favourable to, and suit best with them. God chargeth some for this, Ps. l. *Thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thyself.* Sinners doing with God as the *Ethiopians* with *Angels*, whom they picture with black faces, that they may be like themselves.

Secondly, Suppose thou wert able by reason to demonstrate what God is, yet it were dangerous to enter the list, and dispute it out, by thy naked reason with Satan, who hath, though the worst cause, yet the nimbler head. There is more odds between thee and Satan, than between the weakest idiot and the greatest scholar in the world. Now, who

who would put a cause of so great importance to such a hazard, as thou must do, by reasoning the point with him, that so far out-matches thee? But there is a divine authority in the word, which faith builds on, and this hath a throne in the conscience of the Devil himself; he flies at this: for which cause, Christ, though he was able by reason to have baffled the Devil, yet to give us a pattern, what arms to use for our defence in our conflicts with Satan, he repels him only by the word. *It is written,* saith *Christ,* Luke iv. 4.; and again, *Verse* 8. *It is written.* And it is very observable, how powerful the word quoted by Christ was to *nonplus* the Devil; so, that he had not a word to reply to any Scripture that was brought, but was taken off upon the very mention of the word, and forced to go to another argument. Had *Eve* but stood to her first answer, *God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it,* Gen iii. 3. she had been too hard for the Devil; but letting her hand go, which she had by faith on the word, presently she fell into her enemy's hand. Thus, in this particular, when the Christian, in the heat of temptation, by faith stands upon his defence, interposing the word between him and Satan's blows, I believe that God is, though I cannot comprehend his nature, nor answer thy sophistry; yet I believe the report the word makes of God; Satan may trouble such an one, but he cannot hurt him; nay, it is probable he will not long trouble him. The Devil's antipathy is so great to the word, that he loves not to hear it sound in his ear; but if thou throwest down the shield of the word, and thinkest by the dint or force of thy reason to cut thy way through the temptation, thou mayest soon see thyself surrounded by thy subtil enemy, and put beyond an honourable retreat. This is the reason, I conceive, why, among those few which have professed themselves Atheists, most of them have been great pretenders to reason, such as have neglected the word, and gone forth in the pride of their own understanding, by which (through the righteous judgment of God) they at last have disputed themselves into flat Atheism; while they have turned their backs upon God and his word, thought by digging into the secrets and bowels of nature, to be admired for their knowledge above others, that hath befallen them, which sometimes doth those in mines, that delve too far into the bowels of the earth; a damp from God's secret judgment hath come, to put out that light which

at

at first they carried down with them; and so, that of the Apostle is verified on them, *Where is the disputer of the world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?* 1 Cor. i. 21. Indeed, it is the wisdom of God, that the world, by wisdom, should not know God.

Thirdly, He that assents to this truth, that there is a God, merely upon grounds of reason, and not of faith, and rests in that, he doth not quench the temptation, for still he is an infidel, and a Scripture Atheist; he doth not believe there is a God, at the report of God's word, but at the report of his reason, and so indeed he doth but believe himself, and not God, and in that makes himself a God, preferring the testimony of his own reason before the testimony of God's word, which is dangerous.

But may some say, Is there no use of reason in such principles as this, which are within its sphere? May I not make use of my reason to confirm me in this truth, that there is a God.

It is beyond all doubt that there is; wherefore else did God set up such a light, if not to guide us? But it must keep its place, and that is to follow faith, not to be the ground of it, or to give law and measure to it. Our faith must not depend on our reason, but our reason on our faith. I am not to believe what the word saith, merely because it jumps with my reason; but believe my reason, because it is suitable to the word. The more perfect light is to rule the less; now the light of the word which faith follows, is more clear and sure than reason is, or can be, therefore it was written, because man's natural light was so defective, thou readest in the word there is a God, and that he made the world; thy eye of reason sees this also, but thou layest the stress of thy faith on the word, not on thy reason; and so of other truths. The carpenter lays his rule to the timber, and by his eye sees it to be right or crooked; yet it is not the eye, but the rule, that is the measure, without which his eye might fail him. All that I shall say more to such as are annoyed with atheistical injections, is this; fix thy faith strongly on the word, by which you shall be able to overcome this *Goliah;* and when thou art more free and composed, and the storm is over, thou shalt do well to back thy faith what thou canst with thy reason. Let the word (like *David*'s stone) in the sling of faith, first prostrate the temptation, and then, as he used

used *Goliah*'s sword to cut off his head, so mayest thou, with more ease and safety make use of thy reason to complete the victory over these atheistical suggestions.

CHAP. XVIII.

Of temptations to blasphemy, and how faith quencheth them, and defeats Satan's *double design.*

THE second fiery dart with which he affrights the Christian, is his temptation to blasphemy. Every sin in a large sense, is blasphemy; but here we take it more strictly. When a man does, speaks, or thinks any thing derogatory to the holy nature or works of God, with an intent to reproach him or his ways; this properly is blasphemy. *Job*'s wife was the Devil's solicitor, to provoke her husband to this sin, *Curse God* (saith she) *and die.* The Devil was so impudent, to assault Christ himself with this sin, when he bade him *fall down and worship him;* but he hath an advantage of making a nearer approach to a Saint than he had to Christ. All that he could do to him, was to offend his holy ear with an external motion. It would not stand with the dignity or holiness of Christ's person, to let him come any further; but he can shoot this fiery dart into the imagination of a Saint, to the great disturbance of his thoughts, endeavouring thereby to stir up some unworthy thoughts of God in him; though these commonly are no more welcome to a gracious soul, than the frogs which crept into the bed-chamber of *Pharoah,* were to him. Two things Satan aims at by these injections:

First, To set the Saint a defaming God, which he loves to hear: But if this fails, then he is content to play a lower game, and intends the Christian's vexation, by forcing these unwelcome guests upon him. Now faith, and only faith can quench these fire-balls in both respects.

First, Faith is able to defeat Satan's first plot, by keeping the soul from entertaining any unbecoming or blasphemous thoughts

thoughts of God, and none but faith can do this. There is a natural disposition in every wicked man to blaspheme God. Let God but cross a carnal wretch in his way, and then suffer Satan to edge his corruption, and he will soon fly in God's face: If the Devil's supposition had been true, that *Job* was an hypocrite, then that tale which he brought against him to God, would have been true also. *Put forth now thy hand, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face*, Job i. 11. Had *Job* been the man he took him for, the Devil had not lied; because it is natural to every wicked man to have base thoughts of God; and when provoked, the inward rancour of his heart will appear in the foulness of his tongue. *This evil is of the Lord, what should I wait for the Lord any longer?* 2 Kings vi. 33. A loud blasphemy, the seed of which is found in every unbeliever. There is but one spirit of wickedness in sinners, as but one spirit of grace in Saints. *Peter* tells *Simon Magus, he was in the gall of bitterness*, Acts viii. 23. that is, in a state of sin. Every unbeliever is of a bitter spirit against God, and all that bears his name: There is no trusting the tamest of them all: Let the lion out of his grate, and he will soon shew his bloody nature. An unbeliever hath no more in him to quench such a temptation, than dry wood hath to quench the fire. But now let us see what exploits faith can do in quenching this fiery dart, and how faith does it.

First, Faith sets God before the soul, within sight and hearing of all its thoughts and ways; and this keeps the soul in awe, that it dares harbour nothing unworthy of God in its most secret thoughts. *David* gives the reason, why the wicked are so bold, Psalm lxxxvi. 14. *They have not set thee before them.* Such as defame and asperse the names of others, do it commonly behind their backs. Sin in this life seldom comes to such a ripeness, as to blaspheme God to his face; this is properly the language of hell. There is a mixture of atheism with the blasphemy of sinners while on earth. They do with God as those wretched miscreants did with Christ, they cover his face, and then smite him; they draw a curtain by some atheistical principles betwixt God and them, and then belch out their blasphemies against that God, whose omniscience they do not believe. Now faith eyes God eyeing the soul, and so preserves it. *Curse not the king* (saith *Solomon*), *no, not in thy thought, nor the rich*

rich in thy bed-chamber, for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings, shall tell the matter, Eccl. x. 20, Such kind of language faith useth. Blaspheme not, (saith faith) O my soul, the God of Heaven; thou canst not wisper it so softly, but the voice is heard in his ear, who is nearer to thee, than thou to thyself: and thus it breaks the snare the devil lays. Those unbecoming speeches which dropt from *Job's* mouth, through the length and extremity of his troubles, though they did not amount to blasphemy, yet when God presented himself to him in his majesty, they soon vanished, and he covered his face with shame before the Lord for them; *Now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes,* Job xlii. 5, 6.

Secondly, Faith credits no report of God, but from God's own mouth, and thus it quencheth temptations to blasphemy. It is impossible a soul should have any but holy and loyal thoughts of God, who shapes his apprehensions of him by the Word, which is the only true glass to behold God in, because it alone presents him like himself in all his Attributes, which Satan by this sin of blasphemy one way or other asperses. Faith conceives its notions of God by the Word, resolves all cases of conscience, and deciphers all Providences, (which God writes in mysterious figures) by the Word, for want of which skill, Satan drives the creature very oft to have hard thoughts of God, because he cannot make presently good sense of his administrations in the world. Thus, there have been, who foolishly have charged God's Justice, because some out rageous sinners have not been overtaken with such speedy judgment as they deserve; others have charged as deeply his care and faithfulness, in providing no better for his servants, whom they have seen kept long under the hatches of great afflictions: like him, that seeing a company of Christians in poor ragged cloathes, said, he would not serve that God, who kept his servants no better. These, and such like, are the broken glasses that Satan presents God in, that may he disfigure him to the creature's eye; and truly, if we will look no further, but judge God to be, what he appears to be by them, we shall soon condemn the Holy One, and be within the whirl of this dangerous temptation.

Thirdly, Faith quenches temptations to blasphemy, as it

is praiseful. It disposeth the Christian, to bless God in the saddest condition that can befal it. Now blessing and blasphemy are most contrary ; by the one we think and speak evil, and by the other, good of God, and therefore cannot well dwell under the same roof ; they are like contrary tunes, they cannot be played on the same instrument, without changing all the strings. It is past Satan's skill to strike so harsh a stroke as blasphemy is, on a soul tuned and set to praise God ; now faith doth this, *My heart is fixed,* (saith *David*) there was his faith ; then follows, *I will sing and give praise,* Psal. lvii. 7. It was faith that tuned his spirit, and set his affections praise-way. And would not Satan (think you) have found it a hard task to have made *David* blaspheme God, while his heart was kept in a praising-frame ? Now two ways faith doth this : First, as it spies mercy in the greatest affliction, an eye of white in the saddest mixture of Providence ; so when the Devil provokes to blasphemy from the evil that the creature receives from God, faith shews more good received than evil ; Thus *Job* quenched this dart, which Satan shot at him from his wife's tongue. *Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall not we receive evil ?* Shall a few present troubles be a grave to bury the remembrance of all my past and present mercies? *Thou speakest as one of the foolish women ;* What God takes from me is less than I owe him ; but what he leaves me is more than he owes me. *Solomon* bids us, *In the day of adversity consider,* Eccl. vii. 1. our unbecoming thoughts and words of God, are the product of a rash hasty spirit. Now faith is a considering grace ; *He that believes will not make haste,* no not to think or speak of God. Faith hath a good memory, and can tell the Christian many stories of ancient mercies ; and when his present meal falls short, it can entertain the soul with a cold dish, and not complain that God keeps a bad house. Thus *David* recovered himself, when he was even tumbling down the hill of temptation. *This is my infirmity, but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High, I will remember the works of the Lord, surely will remember thy wonders of old,* Psal. lxxvii. 10, 11. Therefore, Christian, when thou art in thy depths of affliction, and Satan tempts thee to asperse God, as if he were forgetful of thee, stop his mouth with this, *No, Satan, God hath not forgot to do for me, but I have forgot*

forgot what he hath done for me, or else I could not question his fatherly care at present over me; Go, Christian, play over thy own lessons, praise God for past mercies, and it will not be long before thou hast a new song put into thy mouth for a present mercy. Secondly, As faith spies mercy in every affliction, so it holds upon expectation in the soul for more; which confidence disposeth the soul to praise God for, as if the mercy were then in being. *Daniel*, when in the very shadow of death, the plot laid to take away his life, *three times a day he prayed, and gave thanks before his God.* Dan. vi. 10. To have heard him pray in that great strait, would not have afforded so much matter of wonder: but to have his heart in tune for thanksgiving in such a sad hour, was admirable. Mercy in the promise is as the Apple in the seed; faith sees it growing up, the mercy coming. Now a soul under expectation of of deliverance, will scorn a blasphemous motion? when relief is known to be on its way for a garison beseiged, it raiseth their spirits; they will not then hearken to the traitorous motion of the enemy. It is when unbelief is the counsellor, and the soul under doubts and suspicions of God's heart to it, that Satan finds welcome upon such an errand, an excellent instance for both we have in one chapter, Isaiah viii. we find, ver. 17. what is the effect of faith, and that is a chearful waiting on God in straits. *I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him*, and ver. 21. We have the fruit of unbelief, and that is no less than blasphemy: *And it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their King, and their God, and look upward.* Faith keeps the believer in a waiting posture; and unbelief sets the sinner cursing both God and man. None escapes his lash, that crosseth him in his way, no not God himself.

Fourthly, Faith quenches this fiery dart, by purifying the heart of that enmity against God, which in man's corrupt nature is fuel for such a temptation. *Back-biters, haters of God, and despiteful, are joined together, Rom.* 1. 30. No wonder, that a man whose spirit is full of rancour against another, should be easily persuaded to revile him he hates so much. Every unbeliever is a hater of God, and so is in a disposition to blaspheme God, when his will or

lust is crossed by God. But faith slays this enmity of the heart, yea, it works love in the soul to God, and then works by this love. Now it is one property of love, *to think no evil*, 1 Cor. xiii. 5. that is, a man will neither plot any evil against him he loves, nor easily suspect any evil to be plotted by him against himself. Love reads the actions of a friend through such clear spectacles of candor, as will make a dark print seem a fair character; It interprets all he doth, with so much sweetness and simplicity, that those passages in his behaviour towards her, which, to another would seem intricate and suspicious, are plain and pleasing to her; because she ever puts the most favourable sense upon all he doth. The believer dares not himself plot any sin against God, whom he loves so dearly. And as love will not suffer him to turn traitor against a good God, so neither will it suffer him to harbour any jealous thoughts of God's heart towards him; as if he, who was the first lover, and taught the soul to love him, by making love to her, could after all this, frame any plot of real unkindness against it. No, this thought, though Satan may force it in a manner upon the Christian, and violently press for its entertainment, under the advantage of some frowning providence, yet it can never find welcome, so far as to be credited in the soul, where love to God hath any thing to do. And surely there is no fear, that the soul will be persuaded wickedly to belch out blasphemies against God, who so abominates the surmising the least suspicion of God in her most secret thoughts.

The second design Satan hath in these blasphemous temptations, is the Christian's trouble and vexation. Though he doth not find the Christian so kind as to take these guests in, and give them lodging, yet he knows, it will not a little disturb and break his rest, to have them continually knocking at his door, yea, when he cannot polute the Christian by obtaining his consent to them; then he hopes to create him no little disquiet, by accusing him for what he will not commit; and so of a defiler, he is forced to turn slanderous, a reviler, and false accuser. Thus the whore sometimes accuseth the honest man, merely to be revenged on him, because he will not yield to satisfy her lust. *Joseph* would not lie with his *Mistress*, and she raiseth a horrible lie on him. The devil is the blasphemer, but the poor Christian

Christian (because he will not join with him in the fact) shall have the name and bear the blame of it. As the *Jews* compelled *Simon* of *Cyrene* to carry Christ's cross, so Satan would compel the tempted Christian, to carry the guilt of his sin for him. And many times he doth, with such slight of hand, shift it from himself to the Christian's back, that he, poor creature, perceives not the jugler's art of conveying it unto him, but goes complaining only of the baseness of his own heart. And as it sometimes falls out, that a true man, in whose house stolen goods are found, suffers, because he cannot find the thief that left them. So the Christian suffers many sad terrors from the mere presence of these horrid thoughts in his bosom, because he is not able to say, whose they are; whether shot in by Satan, or the steaming forth of his own naughty heart. The humble Christian is prone to fear the worst of himself, even where he is not conscious to himself. Like the *Patriarchs*, who when the cup was found in *Benjamin's* sack, took the blame to themselves, though they were innocent in the fact. And such is the confusion sometimes in the Christian's thoughts, that he is ready to charge himself with those brats, that should be laid at Satan's door. Now here I shall shew you how faith defeateth this second design of the devil in these blasphemous motions. And this it doth two ways. First, by helping the Christian to discern Satan's injections from the motions of his own heart. Secondly, by succouring him though they rise from his own heart.

First, Faith teaches the Christian to distinguish those fire-balls of temptations, which are thrown in at his window by Satan; for those sparks of corruption, which fly from his own hearth, and take fire at his own sinful heart. And certainly, those blasphemous thoughts, of which many gracious souls make such sad complaint, will be found very often of the former sort, as may appear, if we consider, the time when they first stir, and are most busy; the manner how they come; and lastly, the effect they have on the Christian's heart.

First, The time when they begin to stir, and the soul to be haunted with them, and that is ordinarily, when the work of conversion hath newly passed, or is passing upon him; when the creature falls off from his own sinful course, to embrace Christ, and declares for him against sin and Satan; this

this is the time when these blasphemous suggestions begin to make their appearance, a strong probability that they do not breed there, but are sent from Satan by way of revenge for the soul's revolt from him; the Devil dealing by the Christian in this, not much unlike to witches, who to express their spite against those that cross them, sometimes cause them to swarm with vermin, to make them loathsome to themselves: And as one that never found such vermin crawling about him before might well wonder to see himself so suddenly stocked, might rather impute it to the witches malice, than to the corruption of his own body. So in this case, it is very improbable to think, that the creature should in this juncture of time above all, fall so foul with God by sinning against him, to such a height as this; is it likely, that he can, while he is in tears for the sins of his past life, commit a greater than any of them he mourns for? or, that he dare, while he is crying for pardoning mercy with a trembling heart, block up the way to his own prayers, and harden God's heart into a denial of them, by such horrid sins as these? In a word, seems it not strange, that all the while he was a stranger to, and an enemy against God, he durst not venture on this sin for the prodigious nature of it, and that now he begins to love God, those blasphemies should fit his mouth, which were too big and horrid before for him to meddle with.

Secondly, The manner how these blasphemies rise in the Christian's thoughts, will increase the probability, that they are injections from Satan, rather than motions of the Christian's own heart. They are commonly violent and sudden; they come like lightening, flashing into the Christian's thoughts, before he hath time to deliberate with himself what he is doing; whereas that lust, which is the ebullition of our own hearts, is ordinarily gradual in its motion; it moves in a way more still and suitable to man's nature; it doth intice the soul, and by degrees inveigles it into a consent; making first the affections on its side, which then it employeth to corrupt the understanding, and take it off from appearing against it (by putting its eye out with some bribe of sensual pleasure and profit) and so, by these paces it comes at last to have a more easy access to, and success over the will; which being now deprived of her guard, yields the sooner to the summons that lust makes. But these sudden

dartings

dartings of blasphemous thoughts, make a forcible entry upon the soul, without any application used to gain its good will to come in; their driving is like the driving of that hellish *Jehu*, it is the Devil that is got upon the box, who else could drive so furiously? yea, not only their suddenness and violence, but incoherence with the Christian's former thoughts and course, do still heighten the probability, that they are darts shot from the Devil's bow. *Peter* was once known to be of Christ's company by his voice: *thy speech* (say they) *betrayeth thee*; he spake like them, therefore was judged one of them; on the contrary, we may say of these blasphemous motions, they are not the Christians; their language betrays them to be rather the belching of a Devil, than the voice of a Saint. If they were woven by the soul, they would be something like the whole piece, from which they are cut off. There is ordinarily a dependency in our thoughts, we take the hint from one thought for another, as circle riseth out of circle in the moved water, so doth thought out of thought, till they spread into a discourse. Now, may not the Christian well wonder to see, may be when he is at the worship of God, and taken up with holy and heavenly meditations, a blasphemous thought on a sudden appears in the midst of such company, to which it is so great a stranger; and also how it could get in among them? if a holy thought surpriseth us on a sudden, when we stand as it were with our back on heaven, and there be nothing in the discourse, our hearts at present are holding, to usher it in, we may take it as the pure motion of the Spirit of Christ; who indeed but he, could be so soon in the midst of the soul, when the door is shut, even before the creature can turn his thoughts to open it for him? and probably these blasphemies which rush upon thee, O Christian, at a time, when thy soul is at the farthest distance from such thoughts, yea, sailing to the contrary point, in thy praying to and praising of God, are the irruptions of that wicked one, and that on purpose to interrupt thee in that work, which of all other he fears and hates most.

Thirdly, The effect these blasphemous motions have on the heart, may make us think they are Satan's brats, rather than the birth of the Christian's own heart. And that is a dismal horror and consternation of the Christian's spirit, which reacheth often to the discomposure of the body. So that

that an apparition of the devil to their bodily eyes could not affright them more than these blasphemies do, that walk in their imagination. Yea, they do not only cause an horror, but stir up a vehement indignation, and abhorrency in the soul at their presence. If now they be the birth of the Christian's own heart, why this horror? whence this indignation? those motions which arise from ourselves, use to please us better. It is natural for men to love the children of their own loins, though black and deformed; and as natural to like conceptions of their own minds. *Solomon* found out the true mother, by her tenderness to the child. If these blasphemies were the issue of the heart, familiarity with them might be expected, rather than horror at the sight of them; favour to them rather than abhorrency of them; were it not more likely (poor soul) that thou wouldst kiss them (if thy own) than seek to kill them? draw out thy breast to nurse and suckle them, than the sword of the Spirit to destroy them? And if so (saith faith) that these be Satan's brats, why then art thou troubled because he lays them at thy door? Is the chaste woman the more whore, besause some foul tongue calls her so? have patience a little, poor soul, the Judge is at the door, and when he comes, thou shalt be called by thy right name. Sit not thou any longer wounding thy soul with his dart, and troubling thyself for the devil's sin, but go and complain of him to thy God: And when thou hast spread his blasphemies before the Lord, as *Hezekiah* did *Rabshekah's*; comfort thyself with this, that God will spread thy cause against this false accuser, and send him away with as much shame, and as little success, as he did that barking dog, who so reviled God, and railed on his people.

But secondly, Suppose these blasphemous motions, be the Christian's own sins, bred in his own heart, and not the devil's brats, yet here faith relieves the Christian, when distressed with the guilt of them, and Satan labours most to aggravate them. Now the succour faith brings the soul here is manifold.

Faith can assure the soul upon solid Scripture bottoms, that these blasphemous thoughts are pardonable, *Matt.* xii. 31. *All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.* And it were strange, if thy fancy should

should be so wild and melancholy, as to think thou seest this only unpardonable blasphemy (which is every mark on the forehead with final impenitency and desparate hatred against God) in those loose roving thoughts, that never yet could gain any consent from thy heart to them, but continues to disavow, and protest against them. I say, it were very strange that thou couldst long mistake those unwelcome guests for that wicked sin. Now for thy comfort, thou hearest all manner of blasphemy besides that one, shall be forgiven; a pardon for them may be sued out in the court of mercy, how terrible and amazing soever their circumstances are to thy trembling soul; and if the creature believes this, Satan's dart is quenched; for his designs is to make use of these temptations as a trap-door, by which he may let thy soul down into despair.

Faith resolves the soul, that the ebulition of such thoughts is not inconsistent with the state of Grace; and if the soul be well satisfied in this point, the Devil's fiery dart hath lost its invenomed head, which uses so much to drink up the Christian's spirits. The common inference which he makes tempted souls draw from the presence of these thoughts, is, surely I am not a Saint; This is not the spot of God's children; but faith is able to disprove this, and challenges Satan to shew one place in all the Bible, that countenanceth such a conclusion. Indeed there is none. It is true, the blasphemy of blasphemies (I mean the sin against the holy Ghost) with this the evil one shall never touch a true believer; but I know no kind of sin, short of that, from which he hath any such protection, or immunity, as makes it impossible he should for a time be foiled by it. The whole body of sin indeed is weakened in every believer, and a deadly wound given by the grace of God to his corrupt nature. Yet as a dying tree may bear some fruit, though not so much, nor that so full, and ripe as before; as a dying man may move his limbs, though not so strongly as when he was in health; so original corruption in a Saint will be stirring, though but feebly; and thou hast no cause to be discouraged, that it stirs; but to be comforted that it can but stir. O be thankful thou hast got thy enemy, who was master of the field, and had thee tied to his triumphant chariot, now himself on his knees, under the victorious sword of Christ and his grace, ready to drop into his grave,

though lifting up his hand against thee to shew his enmity continues, when his power fails to do execution.

Thirdly, Faith can clear it to the soul, that these blasphemous thoughts, as they are commonly entertained in a Saint, are not so great sins in God's account, as some other that pass for less in our's. The Christian commonly contracts more guilt, by a few proud, unclean, covetous thoughts, than by many blasphemous; because the Christian seldom gets so clear a victory over those, as over these of blasphemy. The fiery darts of blasphemy may scare the Christian more, but fiery lusts wound sooner and deeper. It was the warm sun made the traveller open his cloak, which the blustering wind made wrap closer to him. Temptations of pleasure entice the heart to them; whereas the horrid nature of the other, stirs up the Christian to a more valiant resistance of them. O the Christian is soon overtaken with these, they are like poison in sweet wine, they are down before he is aware, and do diffuse apace into his affections, poisoning the Christian's spirits, but these of blasphemy are like poison in some bitter potion; either it is spit out before it is down, or vomited up by the Christian before it hath spread itself far into his affections. Sins are great or small, by the share the will hath in the acting of them, and blasphemous thoughts commonly having less of the Christian's will and affections in them, than the other, cannot be a greater sin.

Fourthly, Faith tells the soul that God hath gracious ends in suffering him to be haunted with such troublsome guests, or they should not be quartered on him. Possibly, God saw some other in great danger of, and he sends Satan to trouble thee with these temptations, that he may not overcome thee in the other. And though a plaister be very offensive, and loathsome, yet better endure that a while, than a disease, which will hazard thy life. Better tremble at the sight of blasphemous thoughts, than strut thyself in the pride of thy heart at the sight of thy gifts and privileges. The first will make thee think thyself as vile as the Devil himself in thy own eyes; but the other will make thee prodigiously wicked, and so like the Devil in God's eyes.

Faith will put the Christian on some noble exploits for God, thereby to vindicate himself, and prove the Devil's charge

charge a lie, as one that is accused for some traitorous design against his Prince, to wipe of that calumny, doth undertake some notable enterprise for honour. This indeed is the fullest revenge the Christian can take, either of Satan for troubling him with such injections, or his own heart for issuing out such impure streams. When *David* preferred *Saul's* life in the cave above a kingdom, which one hearty blow might have procured him, he proved all his enemies liars that had brought him under a suspicion at court. Thus, Christian, do thou by the honour of God, when it cometh in competition with sin and self; and thou wilt stop the Devil's mouth, who sometimes is ready to make thee jealous of thyself, as if thou wert a blasphemer. Such heroic acts of zeal and self-denial, would speak more for thy purgation before God and thy own conscience, than these sudden thoughts can do against thee.

CHAP. XIX.

The third fiery dart of despair, and the chief argument which Satan urgeth most upon souls to drive them into it (taken from the greatness of sin) refuted, as also the first answer with which faith furnisheth the soul for this purpose.

THE third fiery dart which Satan lets fly at the Christian, is, his temptation to despair. This cursed fiend thinks he can neither revenge himself further on God, nor engrave his own image deeper on the creature, than by this sin, which at once casteth the greatest scorn upon God, and brings the creature nearer the complexion of Devils and damned souls; who by lying continually under the scorching wrath of God, in hell, are black with despair. This is the sin Satan chiefly aims at; other sins are but as previous dispositions to introduce that, and make the crea-

ture more receptive for such a temptation. As the wool hath a tincture of some lighter colour given in, before it can be dyed into a deep grain, so Satan hath his more lightsome and pleasant sins, which he at first entices to, that he may the better dispose the creature to this. The Devil is too cunning a fowler to lay his net in the bird's sight; despair is the net, other sins are but the bait, whereby he flatters them in. This above all sins, puts a man into a kind of actual possession of hell. Other sins bind over to wrath, but this gives fire to the threatening, and sets the soul in a flame with horror. As it is faith's excellency to give a being to the word of Promise; so it is the cruelty of despair to give an existence to the torments of hell in the conscience. This is the arrow that drinks up spirit, and makes the creature executioner to itself. Despair puts a soul beyond all relief; the offer of a pardon comes too late to him that hath turned himself off the ladder. Other temptations have their way to escape; faith and hope can open a window to let out the smoke that offends the Christian in any condition; but the soul must needs be choaked, when it is shut up within the despairing thoughts of its own sins, and no crevice of hope left, to be an out-let to any of that horror with which they fill him.

SECT. I.

I might here instance in those many arguments Satan useth to dispute souls into despair from, and how able faith, and only faith is, to answer and repel them; but I shall content myself with one; which is the chief of all Satan's strength, and that is taken from the greatness and multitude of the creature's sin, which when it is enlightened to see, and hath the brawniness of its conscience pared off, to feel with remorse; then if God but allows Satan to use his rhethoric in declaiming against the heinousness of them, the poor creature must needs be in a doleful condition, and of necessity sink into the depths of despair, for all the help it can find from itself within, or any other creature without. Perhaps some of you (who have slight thoughts of your own sins) think it proves but a childish spirit in others, to be

be so troubled for theirs; and in this you shew that you never were in Satan's stocks, pinched by his temptations; those who have, will speak in another language, and tell you, that the sins which are unfelt by you, have laid like a mountain of lead upon their spirits. O! when a breach is once made in the conscience, and the waves of guilt pour upon the soul, it soon overtops all the creature's shifts and apologies, as the flood did the old world. As nothing then was visible but sea and heaven, so in such a soul, nothing but sin and hell: his sins stare him in the face, as with the eyes of so many Devils, ready to drag him into the bottomless pit; every silly fly dares creep upon the Lion while asleep, whose voice all the beasts in the forest tremble at, when awake. Fools can make a mock of sin, when conscience's eye is out, they can then dance about it, as the *Philistines* about blind *Sampson*; but when God arms sin with guilt, and causeth this serpent to put forth his sting upon the conscience, then the proudest sinner fly before it. Now it is faith that alone can grapple with sin in its strength; which it doth several ways.

SECT. II.

First, Faith gives the soul a view of the great God. It teacheth the soul to set his Almightiness against sin's magnitude, and his infinitude against sin's multitude; and so quencheth the temptation. The reason why the presumptuous sinner fears so little, and the despairing soul so much, is for want of knowing God as great; therefore, to cure them both, the serious consideration of God, under this notion, is propounded, Psalm xlvi. 10. *Be still, and know that I am God:* As if he had said, Know, O ye wicked, that I am God, who can avenge myself when I please upon you, and cease to provoke me by your sins to your own confusion.

Again, Know ye trembling souls, *that I am God;* and, therefore, able to pardon the greatest sins, and cease to dishonour me by your unbelieving thoughts of me. Now faith alone can thus shew God to be God. *Two things* are required to the right conceiving of God.

First, We must give him the infinitude of all his attributes;

butes; that is, conceive of him not only as wise, for that may be a man's name, but infinitely wise; not mighty, but Almighty, &c.

Secondly, This infinitude which we give to God, we must deny to all besides him. Now faith alone can realize and fix this principle so in the heart, that the creature shall act suitably thereunto; indeed, none so wicked, who will not say (if you will believe them), that they believe God is infinite in his knowledge, and omnipresent at their heels wherever they go; infinite in his power, needing no more to effect their ruin, than his speaking it: But would they then in the view of these, go and sin so boldly? They durst as well run their heads into a fiery oven, as do it in the face of such a principle; so others believe God is infinite in mercy: But would they then carry a hell flaming in their bosoms with despair, while they have infinite mercy in their eye? No, it is plain, God appears not in his true greatness to such. Despair robs God of his infinitude, and ascribes it to sin: By it the creature saith, his sin is infinite, and God is not; too like those unbelieving *Israelites*, Psalm cvi. 7. *They remembered not the multitude of his mercies, but provoked him at the sea, even at the red sea;* they could not see enough in God to serve their turn at such a strait; they saw a multitude of *Egyptians* to kill, and multitude of waters to drown them, but could not see multitude enough of mercies to deliver them: Thus the despairing soul sees multitude of great sins to damn, but not an infinitude of mercy in the great God to save him. Reason, alas! is low of stature, like *Zaccheus*, and cannot see mercy in a crowd and press of sins. It is faith alone that climbs the promise; then, and not till then, will the soul see Jesus; faith ascribes mercy to God with an *overplus*, Isaiah lv. 7. *He will abundantly pardon;* multiply to pardon, so the *Hebr.* He will drop pardons with our sins, *He will subdue our iniquities, and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.* This is faith's language; he will pardon with an overflowing mercy: Cast a stone into the sea, and it is not barely covered, but buried many fathoms deep. God will pardon thy greatest sins (saith faith) as the sea doth a little pebble; a few sins poured out upon the conscience (like a pail of water spilled on the ground) seems a great flood; but the greatest poured into the sea of God's mercy, are swallowed up,

up, and not seen. *Thus when the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for* (the Scripture saith) *there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, they shall not be found; for I will pardon,* Jer. l. 20.

SECT. III.

O! but saith the trembling soul, the consideration of God's infinitude, especially in two of his attributes, drives me fastest to despair. When I think how infinitely holy God is, may I not fear what will become of me an unholy wretch? when again I look upon him as just, yea, infinitely just, how can I think he will remit so great wrongs as I have done to his glorious name?

Faith will, and none but faith's fingers can untie this knot, and give the soul a satisfactory answer to this question. The holiness of God.

Faith hath two things to answer:

First, That though the infinite holiness of God's nature doth make him vehemently hate sin, yet the same doth strongly incline his heart to shew mercy to sinners. What is it in the creature that makes him hard-hearted, but sin? *The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel,* Prov. xii. 10. if wicked, then cruel; and the more holy, the more merciful: Hence it is, that acts of mercy and forgiveness are with so much difficulty drawn from those that are Saints, even like milk out of a warded breast; because there are remainders of corruption in them, which cause some to have hardness of heart, and unwillingness to that work; *Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good,* saith the Apostle, *Rom.* xii. 21. implying, it is a hard work which cannot be done, till a victory be got over the Christian's own heart; who hath contrary passions, will strongly oppose such an act. How oft, alas! do we hear such language as this, from those that are gracious? my patience is spent, I can bear no longer, and forgive no more; but God, who is purity without dross; holiness, without the least mixture of sin, hath nothing to sour his heart into any unmercifulness. *If ye bring evil* (saith Christ) *know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your*

your Father, which is in Heaven, give good things to them that ask him? Mat. vii. 11. Christ's design in this place, is to help them to larger apprehensions concerning the mercifulness of God's heart; which, that he may, directs them to the thoughts of his holiness, as that which would infallibly demonstrate the same. As if Christ had said, can you persuade your hearts (distempered with sinful passions) to be kind to your children? how much more easy is it to think, that God, who is holiness itself, will be so to his poor creatures, prostrate at his feet for mercy?

Secondly, Faith can tell the soul, that the holiness of God is no enemy to pardoning mercy; for it is the holiness of God that obligeth him to be faithful in all his promises; and this, indeed, is as full a breast of consolation as any I know, to a poor trembling soul: When the doubting soul reads those many precious promises which are made to returning sinners, why doth he not take comfort in them? Surely, it is because the truth and faithfulness of God to perform them, is yet under some dispute in his soul. Now, the strongest argument that faith hath, to put this question out of doubt, and make the sinner accept the promise as a true and faithful word, is that which is taken from the holiness of God, who is the promise-maker. The promise must be true (saith faith), because a holy God makes it; therefore God, to gain the more credit to the truth of his promise in the thoughts of his people, prefixeth so often this attribute to his promise: *I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel,* Isaiah xli. 14. Indeed the mercies of God are founded in holiness, and therefore are sure mercies. The reason of man's unfaithfulness in promises, proceeds from some unholiness in his heart; the more holy a man is, the more faithful we may expect him to be; a good man will be as good as his word; to be sure, a good God will. How many times did *Laban* change *Jacob*'s wages after promise? But God's covenant with him was inviolably kept, though *Jacob* was not so faithful on his part as he ought: And why? but because he had to do with a holy God in this; but with a sinful man in the other; whose passions altered his thoughts, and changed his countenance towards him.

We come to the second Attribute, which scares the tempted soul, and seems so little to befriend this pardoning Act

Act of God's mercy. And that is his Justice, which proves often matter of amazement to the awakened sinner, rather than encouragement, especially when the serious thoughts of it possess his heart. Indeed the naked consideration of this attribute, and the musing on it, without a Gospel-comment, through which alone it can be safely and comfortably viewed by a sin-smitten soul, must needs dispirit him, yea, kindle a fire of horror in his bosom: for the creature seeing no way that God hath to vindicate his provoked justice, but by the eternal destruction and damnation of the sinner, cannot without an universal consternation of all the powers of his soul, think of that attribute, which brings to his thoughts so fearful an expectation and looking-for of judgment. *Heman*, though a holy man, yet even lost his wits with musing on this subject, Psalm lxxxviii. 15, 16. *While I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted.* But faith can make good work of this also; faith will enable the soul to walk in this fiery attribute, with his comforts unsinged, as those three worthies, *Dan.* iii. did in the flaming furnace; while unbelieving sinners are scorched, yea, swallowed up into despair, when they do but come in their thoughts near the mouth of it. There is a three-fold consideration with which faith relieves the soul, when the terror of this attribute takes hold of it.

SECT. IV.

First, Faith shews (upon the best evidence) that God may pardon the greatest sinner, if penitent and believing, without the least prejudice to his justice.

Secondly, Faith goes further, and shews, that God in pardoning the believing sinner, doth not only save his justice, but advance the honour of it.

Thirdly, That God doth not only save and advance his justice in pardoning a believing soul, but (as things stand now,) he hath no other way to secure his justice, but by pardoning the believing soul his sins, be they never so great. These three well digested, will render this attribute as amiable, lovely, and comfortable to the thoughts of a believer, as that of mercy itself.

First, Faith shews, (upon the best evidence) that God may

pardon its sins, though never so great, with safety to the justice of God. That question is not now to be disputed, whether God can be just and righteous in pardoning sinners. This (saith faith) was debated and determined long ago, at the Counsel-board of Heaven by God himself. God expresseth thus much in the promise, *Hosea* ii. 19. *I will betroth thee unto me for ever, yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness and in judgment.* Who is this that God means to marry? one that had played the whore, as appears by the former part of the chapter. What doth he mean by betrothing? no other, but that he will pardon their sins, and receive them into the arms of his love and peculiar favour: but how can the righteous God take one that hath been a filthy strumpet, into his bosom? betroths such a whorish people, pardon such high climbing sin? how? Mark, *He will do it in judgment and in righteousness.* As if God had said, Trouble not your thoughts to clear my justice in the act; I know what I do; the case is well weighed by me. It is not like the sudden matches that are huddled up by men in one day, and repented of the next; but is the result of the Counsel of my holy Will. Now when Satan comes full mouth against the believer with this objection, What, such a wretch as thou find favour in the eyes of God? faith can easily retort. Yes, Satan, God can be as righteous in pardoning me, as in damning thee. God tells me, it is in judgment and in righteousness. I leave thee therefore to dispute this case out with God, who is able to justify his own act. Now, though this were enough to repel Satan, yet faith is provided with a more particular evidence, for the vindication of the justice and righteousness of God in this his pardoning act. And this is founded on the full satisfaction which Christ hath given to God for all the wrong the believer hath done by his sin. Indeed it was the great undertaking of Christ, to bring Justice to kiss Mercy; that there might not be a dissenting attribute in God, when this vote should pass, but the act of pardoning mercy might be carried clear, *nullo contradicente.* Therefore Christ, before he solicits the sinner's cause with God by *request*, performs first the other of satisfaction by *sacrifice.* He pays, and then prays for what he hath paid: presenting his petition in the behalf of believing sinners, written with his own blood, that so justice might not disdain to read or grant it. I will not

not dispute, whether God could by prerogative mercy (without a satisfaction) have issued out an act of pardon; but in this way of satisfaction, the righteousness of God (I am sure) may be vindicated in the conscience of the greatest sinner on earth; yea, the Devil himself is but a faint disputant, when faith pinches him with this argument: it is a trench, which he is not able to climb. Indeed, God laid out salvation in this method, that even we weak ones might be able to justify him, in justifying us, to the most malicious devil in hell. Peruse that incomparable place, which hath balm enough in it, to heal the wounds of all the bleeding consciences in the world, where there is but faith to drop it in; and for ever to quench the fire of this dart, which is headed with the justice of God, *Rom.* iii. 24, 25, 26. *Being justified freely by his grace, through the Redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God: To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.* O what work will faith make of this Scripture; a soul castled within these walls is impregnable: First, observe, Christ is here called a *propitiation*, or if you will, a *propitiatory*, alluding to the *Mercy-seat*, where God promised to meet his people, that he might converse with them, and no dread from his majesty fall upon them, *Exod.* xxv. Now, you know, the *Mercy-seat* was placed over the Ark, to be a cover thereunto, it being the Ark wherein the holy Law of God was kept, from the violation of which all the fears of a guilty soul arise; therefore it is observable, that the dimensions of the one was proportioned to the other. The *Mercy-seat* was to be as long and broad to the full as the *Ark*, that no part thereof might be unshadowed by it; *ver.* 10. compared with *ver.* 17. Thus, *Christ* our ture *Propitiatory*, covers all the Law, which else would come in to accuse the believer; but not one threatening now can arrest him, so long as this screen remains for faith to interpose between God's wrath and the soul. Justice now hath no mark to level at; God cannot see the sinner for Christ that hides him. This is not the man (saith wrath) that I am to strike. See how he flies to Christ, and takes Sanctuary in his satisfation, and so is got out of my walk

and reach, that being a privileged place, where I must not come to arrest any. It is usual you know in battle to wear a ribband, handkerchief, or some such thing, to distinguish friends from foes. Christ's satisfaction, worn by faith, is the sign that distinguisheth God's friends from his enemies. The scarlet thread on *Rahab's* window, kept the destroying sword out of her house : and the blood of Christ pleaded by faith, will keep the soul from receiving any hurt at the hands of divine justice.

Secondly, Observe, what hand Christ hath his commission from, whom God hath set forth, to be a propitiation through faith in his blood. Christ, we see, is the great Ordinance of heaven ; him the father hath sealed ; he is singled out from all others, Angels and men, and set forth as the person chosen of God, to make atonement for sinners, (as the Lamb was taken out of the flock, and set apart for the Passover). When therefore Satan sets forth the believer's sins in battle array against him, and confronts him with their greatness ; then faith runs under the shelter of this Rock. Surely (saith faith) my Saviour is infinitely greater than my greatest sins. I should impeach the wisdom of God, to think otherwise. Who knew what a heavy burthen he had to lay upon his shoulders, and was fully satisfied of his strength to bear it. He that refused sacrifice and burnt offering for their insufficiency, would not have called him, had he not been all-sufficient for the work. Indeed here lies the weight of the whole building ; a weak faith may save, but a weak Saviour cannot ; faith hath Christ to plead for it, but Christ hath none to plead for him ; faith leans on Christ's arm ; but Christ stood upon his own legs, and if he had sunk under the burthen of our sins, he had been past the reach of any creature in heaven or earth to help him up.

Thirdly, observe the reason, why God chose this way of issuing out his pardoning mercy, and that is, *to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins.* Mark, not to declare his mercy, that is obvious to every eye. Every one will believe him merciful, that is forgiving ; but to conceive how God should be righteous in forgiving sinners, this lies more remote from the creature's apprehensions ; and therefore it is repeated, *ver.* 26. *To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier*

justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. As if God had said, I know why it appears so incredible (poor sinners) to your thoughts, that I should pardon all your iniquities: you think, because I am a righteous God, that I will sooner damn a thousand worlds of sinners, than asperse my justice, and bring my name under the least suspicion of unrighteousness; and that thought is most true. I would indeed damn them over and over again, rather than stain the honour of my justice, which is myself; but I declare, yea, again I declare it, and command you, and the greatest sinners on earth, upon pain of damnation to believe it; that I can be just, and yet the justifier of those sinners who believe in Jesus; O what boldness may the believer take at this news? methinks I see the soul, that was even now pining to death with despair, and plotting upon hell in his thoughts (as one already free among the dead) now revive and grow young again at these tidings; as *Jacob*, when he heard *Joseph* was alive: What? Is justice (the only enemy I feared, an attribute in God's heart, which my thoughts fled from) now become my friend? then cheer up my soul, who shall condemn, if God justifies? And how can God himself be against thee, when his very justice acquits thee?

SECT. V.

But Satan will not thus leave the soul; dost thou, poor creature, (saith he) believe this strange Divinity? is it just for God to pardon thee for the satisfaction that another makes? one man commit the murder, and another man that is innocent hanged for it; call you this just; the law demands the person sinning to be delivered up to justice; we find no mention of a surety to be allowed by the Covenant, *in the day that thou eatest thou shalt die.*

First, Faith teaches the soul to acquiesce in the declaration that God makes of his own mind. Now though the threatening at first acquaints us with the sinners name only; yet faith finds a gracious relaxation of threatening in the Gospel-Covenant; where to the believer's everlasting comfort, God promiseth to accept the sinner's debt at Christ's hand,

hand, whom therefore we find arrested upon our action, Isaiah liii. 5. *He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.* Here is bottom strong enough for faith to rest on. And why should we (shallow creatures) ruffle Gospel truths, to the ensnarling our own thoughts, by thinking to fathom the bottomless depth of God's justice, with the short cordage of our reason, which we see dunced by the meanest piece in God's work of creation? faith spies a devil in this beautiful Serpent, Reason, which for its smooth tongue Satan useth on mischievous designs to undermine, in particular, this one most sweet and fundamental truth of the Gospel, I mean the satisfaction of Christ; and therefore faith protests against the legallity of reason's court. What indeed hath reason to call before her lower bench these mysteries of our faith, that are purely supernatural, and so not under her cognizance? and that those, in this proud age of ours, would consider it, who go to law (as I may say) with the highest Gospel truths, before this heathen judge, Reason; whereby they evacuate one great end of the Gospel, which is to sacrifice our shallow reason on faith's Altar, that so we might give the more signal honour to the truth of God, in believing the high mysteries of the Gospel upon his naked report of them in the Word.

Secondly, The believer can clear God as just in receiving the debt at Christ's hand, from that near union that is betwixt Christ and his people. The husband may lawfully be arrested for his wife's debt, because this union is voluntary; and it is to be supposed he did, or ought to have considered what her estate was, before he contracted so near a relation to her. A suit may justly be commenced against a surety, because it was his own act to engage for the debt. Christ was most free in engaging himself in the sinners cause. He knew what a sad plight man's nature was in; and he had an absolute freedom in his choice, whether he would leave man to perish, or lend his helping hand towards his recovery; he had also an absolute power of his own life, which no mere creature hath; so that it being his own offer (upon his Father's call) to take our nature in marriage, thereby to interest himself in our debt, and for the payment of it, to disburse and pour out his own precious blood to death;

how

how dare proud flesh call the justice of God to the bar, and bring his righteousness in this transaction into question, for which God promised himself the highest expressions of love and thankfulness at his creature's hands ?

Thirdly, Faith doth not only bear witness to the justice of God, that he may pardon a poor believing sinner, and yet be just; but it shews that he may advance the honour of his justice by pardoning the believing soul, more than in damning the impenitent sinner. And surely God had no less design in the Gospel-Covenant than this, that he would not the death of a sinner, but to vindicate his justice; would not certainly have consented to the death of his only Son, but for the higher advance, and further glorifying of his justice in the eye of his creature: Christ saith, *he came not only, that we sinners might have life, but that we might have it more abundantly,* John x. that is, more abundantly than we should have inherited it from innocent *Adam.* May we not therefore say, that Christ did not die, that God might only have his due debt, but that he might have it more abundantly paid by Christ, than he could have had at the creature's hand? but more particularly the justice of God will appear here clothed with four glorious circumstances, that cannot be found in the payment which the sinner by his own personal sufferings makes unto it.

First, If we consider the person at whose hand divine justice receives satisfaction. When the sinner is damned for his own sins, it is but a poor sorry creature that is punished; but when Christ suffereth, the debt is paid by a more honourable hand: God hath it from one that is near to himself, yea, equal with himself. *Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts.* Zech. xiii. 7. who will not say, a judge gives more eminent testimony of his justice, when he condemns his own Son, than when he arraigns a stranger? Here God indeed declared his utmost hatred to sin, and inflexible love to justice, in that he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.

Secondly, If we consider the manner how the debt is paid, when the sinner is damned, it is in a poor beggarly way by retail; now a few pence, and then a few more; he is ever paying, but never comes to the last farthing, and therefore must for ever lie in prison for non-payment. But at Christ's hands

hands God receives the whole debt in one lump, so that Christ could truly say, *It is finished*, John xix. 30. as much as if he had said, there are but a few moments, and the work of redemption will be finished. I have the sum now in my hand to pay God his whole debt, and as soon as I have bowed my head, and the breath is once out of my body, all will be finished. Yea, he hath his discharge for the receipt of the whole sum due to God's justice, from the mouth of God himself, in which we find him triumphing, *Isaiah* v. 8. *He is near that justifieth me, who will contend with me?* yea, still more, Christ hath not only discharged the old debt, but by the same blood hath made a new purchase of God for his saints. So that God, who was even now the creditor, is become the debtor to his creature, and that for no less than eternal life, which Christ hath paid for, and given every believer authority, humbly to claim of God in his name. See them both in one place, *Heb.* x. 13, 14, 15. *But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his foot-stool, for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.* He hath not only crossed the debt-book for believers, but perfected them for ever; that is, made as certain provision for their perfection in glory, as for their salvation from hell's punishment. From which he exhorts them, *ver.* 22. *to draw near in full assurance of faith.* Let us not fear, but we shall receive at God's hands what Christ hath paid for.

Thirdly, When God damns the sinner, his justice indeed appears. Those condemned miscreants have not one righteous syllable to charge their Judge withal; but mercy is not seen to sit so glorious on the throne in this sentence pronounced on the sinner. But when Christ suffered, justice and mercy met; indeed justice appears never more orient in God or man, than when it is in conjunction with mercy. Now in the Lord Christ's death, they shone both in all their glory, and did mutually set off each other. Here the white and the red, the roses and the lillies were so admirably tempered, that it is hard to say, which presents the face of justice most beautiful to our eye, God's wrath upon Christ for us, or his mercy to us for his sake.

Fourthly, When God damns the sinner, justice is glorified only

only passively. God forceth his glory from Devils and damned souls ; but they do not willingly pay the debt. They acknowledge God just, because they can do no other, but at the same time hate him. while they seem to vindicate him; now in the satisfaction that Christ gives ; justice is glorified actively, and that both from Christ, who was not dragged to the cross, as the damned are to their prison and torment. *But gave himself for us, an offering, and a sacrifice to God*, Ephes. v. 2. suffering as willingly for us, as ever we sinned against him. And also from believing souls, who now sing praises to the mercy and justice of God that redeemed them ; and will for ever in heaven ; now by how much the voluntary sufferings of Christ are better than the forced torments of the damned ; and the cheerful praises of Saints in heaven more melodious in God's ear than the extorted acknowledgements of damned souls in hell; by so much the justice of God is more glorified by Christ's sufferings, than theirs. O what incomparable boldness may this send the soul withal to the throne of grace ? who, when he is begging pardon for Christ's sake, may without any hazard to his eternal salvation, say, *Lord*, if my damnation will glorify thy justice more, or so much as the death of Christ for me hath done, and the everlasting praises (which my thankful heart shall resound in heaven to the glory of all thy attributes for my salvation) will do, let me have that rather than this.

Thirdly, Faith doth not only see justice preserved, yea, advanced in this act of pardoning mercy ; but it will tell the soul, that God cannot be just, if he doth not pardon the sins of a repenting, believing soul, how great soever they have been. One great part of justice consists in a faithful and punctual performance of promises : he is a just man, that keeps his word. And can God be a just God if he doth not ? The word is gone out of his mouth, that he will forgive such. Yea, he is willing to be accounted just or unjust by us, as he makes performance thereof. See where he lays this his attribute to pawn, upon this very account, 1 *John* i. 9. *If we confess our sins, he is just and faithful to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*, he doth not say merciful, but just ; as the attribute which we most fear should vote against us ; this, he would have us know, is bound for the performance of the promise. It was

mercy in God to make the promise; but justice to perform what mercy hath promised, *Micah* vii. 20. *Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and mercy to Abraham,* God was not bound to make a promise to *Abraham* and his seed; but having once passed his Word to him, it was truth to *Jacob*, who was heir to that bond to which God had left in his Father's hand.

CHAP. XX.

Faith's second Answer to Satan's Argument, taken from the greatness of sin, to drive the soul to despair: where faith opposeth the greatness of the promises, against the greatness of the soul's sin.

SECONDLY, Faith quenches this temptation to despair, drawn from the greatness of sin, by opposing the greatness of the promises, faith can only see God in his greatness; and therefore none but faith can see the promises in their greatness: because the value of promises is according to the worth of him that makes them; hence it comes to pass, that promises have so little efficacy on an unbelieving heart, either to keep from sin, or to comfort under terror for sin. Promises are like the clothes we wear; which if there be heat in the body to warm them, then they will warm us: but if they receive no heat from the body, they give none to it; where there is faith, there the promise will afford comfort and peace; it will be as a strong cordial glowing with inward joy in the creature's bosom, but on a dead unbelieving heart, it lies cold and ineffectual; it hath no more effect on such a soul than a cordial that is poured down a dead man's throat hath on him. The promises have not comfort actually and formally as fire hath heat: Then it were only going to them, and we should be warm, taking them up in our thoughts, and we should be comforted; but virtually, as fire is in the flint, which requires some labour and art to strike it out. Now none but faith

faith can learn us this skill of drawing out the sweetness and virtue of the promise, which it doth three ways.

SECT. I.

First, Faith leads the soul to the spring-head of the promise, where it may stand with best advantage, to take a view of their greatness and preciousness. Indeed we understand little of things, till we trace them to their originals, and can see them lying in their causes. Then a soul will know his sins to be great, when he sees them in their spring and sourse, flowing from an invenomed nature, that teems with enmity against God. Then the sinner will tremble at the threatenings, which roll like thunder over his head, ready to fall every moment in some judgment or other upon him; when he sees from whence they are sent, the perfect hatred that God bears to sin, and infinite wrath with which he is inflamed against the sinner for it. In a word, then the poor trembling soul will not count the consolation of the promises small, when it sees from what fountain it flows, the bosom of God's free mercy. This, indeed, is the original source of all promises. The covenant itself, which comprehends them all, is called *mercy*, because the product of mercy, Luke i. 72. *To perform the mercy promised to our Fathers, and to remember his holy covenant.* Now, saith faith, if the promises flow from this sea of God's free mercy, then they must needs be infinite, boundless, and bottomless, as that is; so that to reject the promise, or question the sufficiency of the provision made in it, because thy sins are great or many, casts a dishonorable reflection on that mercy, in whose womb the promise was conceived; and God will certainly bring his action of defamation against thee, for aspersing this his darling attribute, which he can least endure to see slandered and traduced. God makes account you have done your worst against him, when once you report him to be unmerciful, or scant in his mercy. How great a sin this is, may be conceived by the thoughts God hath of this disposition and frame of spirit in his creature. An unmerciful heart is such an abomination before the Lord, that it hath few like it. This lies at the bottom of the heathen's charge, as the sediment

and grossest part of all their horrid sins, Rom. i. 31. *They were implacable, unmerciful.* Now, to attribute that to God, which he so abhors in his creature, must needs make a heart tender of the good name of God to tremble, and exceedingly fear. It was a dreadful punishment God brought upon *Jehoram*, king of *Judah*, 2 Chron. xxi. 18. *whom he smote in his bowels with an incurable disease, that after two years (torment) his bowels fell out.* And why did this heavy plague befal him? Surely to let him know his want of bowels of mercy to his brethren and princes, whom he most cruelly butchered. He had not bowels in his heart, and he, therefore, shall have none in his body. Now darest thou (saith faith) impute want of bowels to God, that he will not shew mercy to thee, who penitently seeks it in Christ's name, when thou seest what testimony he gives of his incensed wrath against those men, who have hardened their bowels against their brethren, yea, their enemies? O! have a care of this. To shut thy own bowels of compassion from thy brother in need, is a grievous sin, and brings it into question, whether the love of God dwells in thee, 1 *John* iii. 17. But to asperse the merciful heart of God, as if his bowels of compassion were shut against a poor soul in need, that desires to repent and return, is transcendantly the greater abomination, and puts it out of all question (where it is persisted in) that the love of God dwells not in him. It is impossible that love to God should draw such a mishapen protrait of God as this is.

SECT. II.

Secondly, Faith attends to the end of the promises, which gives a further prospect of their greatness. Now the word, which is the light faith goes by, discovers a double end of promises, especially of the promise of pardoning mercy.

First, The exalting and magnifying the riches of free grace, which God would have appear in all its glory (so far as it is possible to be exposed to the creature's view, for the full sight of God's glory is an object adequate to his own eye, and none else) see this counsel and mysterious design sweetly opened, *Ephes. chap.* i. *ver.* 6, 9, 11, 12. The sum of all which will amount to this, That God in himself hath taken

taken up a purpose of pardoning and saving a company of poor lost sinners for Christ's sake; and this he hath promulged in the promises of the gospel; and the end of all is, that he might gather these all together at last in heaven; some of which are already there, others of them at present on earth, and some yet unborn, and when they shall all meet together in one glorious choir, they may, by their triumphant songs and hallelujahs, fill the heavens with praisful acclamations of thankfulness to the glory of that mercy which hath thus pardoned and saved them. Now, faith observing the praise of God's mercy to be the end aimed at by him in the promise, comes with good news to the trembling soul, and tells it; that if God will be true to his own thoughts, and keep his eye on that mark where first he hath set it; impossible it is, that he should reject any poor penitent sinner, merely for the greatness of the sins he hath committed. It is the exaltation of his mercy (saith faith) that God hath in his eye, when he promiseth pardon to poor sinners. Now, which exalts this most, to pardon little or great sinners? whose voice will be highest in the song of praise, thinkest thou? Surely his, to whom most is forgiven; and, therefore, God cannot, but be most ready to pardon the greatest sinners, when truly penitent. A physician that means to be famous, will not send away those that most need his skill and art, and only practice upon such diseases as are slight and ordinary. They are great cures, which ring far and near; when one given over by himself and others, as a dead man, is, by the skill and care of a physician, rescued out of the jaws of death, and raised to health. This commends, and gains him more reputation than a whole year's practice in ordinary cures. The great revenue of praise is paid into God's Exchequer from those who have had great sins pardoned. *He that hath five hundred pence forgiven, will love more than he that hath but fifty, by Christ's own judgment*, Luke vii. 43. and where there is most love, there is like to be most praise; love and praise being symbolical, the one soon resolving into the other. The voice of a *Manasses*, a *Magdalen*, and a *Paul*, will be heard (as I may say) above all the rest in heaven's concert. The truth is, greatness of sin is so far from putting a bar to the pardoning of a penitent sinner in God's thoughts, that he will pardon none (how little sinners soever they have been) except they see and acknowledge

ledge their sins to be great before they come to him on such an errand. And therefore he useth the law, to make way (by its convictions and terrors on the conscience) for his pardoning mercy, to ascend the throne in the penitent sinners heart, with the more magnificence and honour, *Rom.* v. 20. *The law entered* (that is, it was promulged at first by *Moses*, and is still preached) *that the offence might abound* (that is, in the conscience, by a deeper sense and remorse): And why so? but that, *where sin abounded, grace might much more abound.* We must needs shape our thoughts of the mercy that pardons our sins, suitable to the thoughts we frame to ourselves of the sins we have committed; if we conceive these little, how can we think the other great? And if we tremble at the greatness of our sins, we must needs triumph and exult at the transcendency of the mercy, which so far exceeds their greatness. He that wonders at the height of some mountain, would much more wonder at the depth of those waters, which should quite swallow and cover it from being seen.

The second end of the promise is, the believer's comfort. The word, especially this part of it, was on purpose writ, *that through patience and comfort of the Scriptures they might have hope,* Rom. xv. 4. God was willing to give poor sinners all the security and satisfaction concerning the reality of his intentions, and immutability of this counsel, which his mercy had resolved upon from eternity, for the saving of all those who would embrace Christ; which, that he might do, he makes publication thereof in the Scripture, where he opens his very heart, and exposeth the purposes of his love (that he had from everlasting, for the salvation of poor sinners) to their own view, in the many precious promises (that run like veins throughout the whole body of the Scriptures), and these with all the seals and ratifications which either his wisdom could find, or man's jealous unbelieving heart desire. And all to silence the querilous spirit of poor tempted souls, and make their life more comfortable; who, pursued by the hue and cry of their high climbing sins, take sanctuary for their lives in Christ Jesus. As we have it, *in totidem verbis,* Heb. vi. 18. *That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope that is set before us.* And because this,

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the greatness and multitude of the creature's sins, is both the heaviest milstone which the Devil can find, to tie about the poor sinner's neck, in order to the drowning him in despair; and that knife also, which is oftenest taken up by the tempted sinners's own hands for the murdering his faith; therefore the more frequent and abundant provision is made by God against this, *Exod.* xxxiv. 5. *Jer.* iii. the whole chapter, *Isaiah* i. 18. *Isaiah, ch.* lv. 7, 8, 9, and 21. *Heb.* vii. 25.; 1 *John* i. 9. These, and such like places, are the strong holds which faith retreats into, when this battery is raised against the soul. Canst thou for shame be gravelled (saith faith, O my soul!) with an argument drawn, merely from the greatness of thy sins? which is answered in every page almost in the Bible, and to confute which, so considerable a part of Scripture was writ. Thus faith hisseth Satan away with this his argument (that he counts so formidable) as they would do a wrangling sophister out of the schools, when he boldly and ridiculously denies some known principle, acknowledged by all for a truth. But I would not be here mistaken: God forbid, that while I am curing despair, I should cause presumption. These two distempers of the soul are equally dangerous, and so contrary, that like the cold stomach, and the hot liver in the same person, while the physician thinks to help nature in the one, to a heat, for digesting its food, he sometimes unhappily kindles a fire in the other, that destroys nature itself. Thus, while we labour to cheer the drooping soul's spirits, and strengthen him to retain and digest the promise for his comfort, we are in danger of nourishing that feverish heat of presumptuous confidence, which is a fire will soon eat out all care to please, and fear to displease God. Faith and fear, being like the natural heat and radical moisture in the body, which is never well, but when both are preserved. The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear him, and hope in his mercy. Let me, therefore, caution thee, Christian: As thou meanest to find any relief from the mercy of God in a day of distress, take heed thou dost not think to befriend thyself with hopes of any favour thou mayst find from thy lust. Thou needest not indeed fear to believe the pardon of thy sins, if thou repentest of them, merely because they are great; but tremble to think of sinning boldly, because the mercy of God is great. Though mercy be willing to be a sanctuary to the

trembling

trembling sinner, to shelter him from the curse of his sin, yet it disdains to spread her wing over a bold sinner, to cover him while he is naught with his lust. What! sin because there are promises of pardon, and these promises made by mercy, which as far exceeds our sins, as God doth the creature? Truly, this is the *Antipodes* to the meaning, that God's mercy had in making them, and turns the gospel heels upwards. As if your servant should get to your cellar of strong waters, and with them make himself drunk, which you keep for them, when sick or faint. O! take heed of quaffing thus in the bowels of the sanctuary. It is the sad soul, not the sinning, that this wine of consolation belongs to.

SECT. III.

Faith presents the Christian with a cloud of witnesses, to whom the promise hath been fulfilled, and these as great sinners as himself. Scripture-examples are promises verified, which faith may make use of by way of encouragement as well as promises. God would never have left the Saint's great blots to stand in the Scriptures, to the view of the world in all succeeding generations, had not it been of such use and advantage to tempted souls, to choke this temptation, which of all other makes the most dangerous breach, so wide sometimes, that despair itself is ready to enter in at it. Blessed *Paul* gives this very reason, why such acts of pardoning mercy to great sinners are recorded; *Ephes.* ii, he shews:

First, What foul filthy creatures, himself and other believers co-temporary with him, were, before they were made partakers of gospel-grace, *ver.* 3. *Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of the flesh;* and then he magnifies the rich mercy of God, that rescued and took them out of that desperate state: *Verse* 4. *But God who was rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, hath quickened us in Christ.* And why must the world know all this? O! God had a design and plot of mercy to more than themselves in them: *Verse* 7. *That in the ages to come, he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus.* Wherever the gospel

gospel comes, this shall be spoken of, what great sins he had forgiven to them, that unbelief might have her mouth stopt to the end of the world, and this arrow, which is so oft on Satan's string, might be made harmless. God commanded *Joshua to take twelve stones out of the midst of Jordan, and set them up;* and observe the reason, ver. 6, 7. *That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, What mean you by these stones? Then ye shall answer them, that the waters of Jordan were cut off before the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off, and these stones shall be a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever.* Thus God hath, by his pardoning mercy, taken up some great notorious sinners out of the very depths of sin, who lay at the very bottom, as it were, of hell, swallowed up, and ingulfed in all manner of abomination; and these he hath set up in his word, that when any poor tempted souls, to the end of the world, overwhelmed with fears, from the greatness of their sins, shall see and read what God hath done for these, they may be relieved and comforted with these examples, by God intended to be as a memorial of what he hath done for others in time past; so a sign, what he can still do, yea, will, for the greatest sinners (to the world's end) upon their repentance and faith. No sins, though as great and many as the waters of *Jordan* themselves, shall be able to stand before the mercy of God's gracious covenant, but shall all be cut off, and everlastingly pardoned to them. O! who can read a *Manasseh*, a *Magdalen*, a *Saul*, yea, an *Adam* (who undid himself, and a whole world with him) in the roll of pardoned sinners, and yet turn away from the promise, out of fear there is not mercy enough in it to serve his turn? These are as landmarks, that shew what large boundaries mercy hath set to itself, and how far it hath gone, even to take into its pardoning arms the greatest sinners, that make not themselves incapable thereof by final impenitency. It were a healthful walk (poor doubting Christian) for thy soul, to go this circuit, and oft to see where the utmost stone is laid, and boundary set by God's pardoning mercy, further than which he will not go. That thou mayest not turn to the prejudice of the mercy of God by thy own unbelief, nor suffer thyself to be abused by Satan's lies, who will make nothing to remove

God's land mark (if he may by it, but increase thy trouble of spirit). But if after all this, thy sins seem to exceed the proportion of any one, thou canst find pardoned in Scripture (which were strange) yet faith at this plunge hath one way left beyond all these examples for thy soul's succour, and that is to fix thy eye on Christ, who, though he never had sin of his own, yet laid down his life to procure pardon for all the elect, and hath obtained it (they are all, and shall as they come upon the stage, be pardoned). Now, saith faith, suppose thy sins were greater than any of the Saints; yet are they as great as all the sins of all the elect together? Thou darest not surely say or think so. And cannot Christ procure thy pardon, who art but a single person, that hath done it for so many millions of his elect? yea, were thy sins as great as all theirs are, the sum would be the same; and God could forgive it, if it lay in one heap, as well as now it is in several. Chirist is *the Lamb that takes away the sin of the world,* John i. 29. See here, all the sins of the elect world, and he carries it lightly away into the land of forgetfulness. Now faith will tell thee, poor soul, that the whole virtue and merit of Christ's blood, by which the world was redeemed, is offered to thee, and shall be communicated to thy soul in particular. Christ doth not retail and parcel out his blood, some to one, and some to another, but he gives his whole self to the faith of every believer: All is your's, you are Christ's. O! what mayest thou not, poor soul, take up from the promise, upon the credit of so great a Redeemer?

CHAP. XXI.

Faith's third Answer to Satan's Argument, urging the Soul to despair. Where Faith opposeth the greatness of this one sin of despair, to the greatness of the rest.

THIRDLY, Faith, to quench this fiery dart, headed with the greatness of sin, and shot by Satan to drive the penitent soul

soul to despair, teacheth him to oppose the greatness of this one sin of despair, to the greatness of all his other sins: What, saith faith, would Satan persuade thee, because thou hast been so great and prodigious a sinner, therefore not to believe, or dare to think the promise hath any good news for thee? retort thou, O my soul, his argument upon himself, and tell him, that very thing by which he would dissuade thee from believing, doth much more deter thee from despairing; and that is the greatness of this sin above all other. Grant, to be true what he chargeth thee with, that thou art such a monster in sin as he sets thee forth, (though thou hast no reason to think so, upon his bare report, dost thou think to mend the matter, or better thy condition, by despairing? Is this all the kindness he will shew thee, to make thee of a great sinner, a desperate sinner like himself? This indeed is the only way he can think of, to make thee worse than thou art; and that this is true, faith is able to prove by these four considerations, which will easily evince more malignity to be in this one sin of despair, than in any other, yea, all other together.

SECT. I.

Despair opposeth God in the greatest of all his commands. The greatest command, without all compare, in the whole Bible is to believe: when those Jews asked our Lord Jesus, *John* vi. 28. *What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?* mark this answer, v. 29. *This is the work of God, that ye believe on him, whom he hath sent.* As if he had said, the most compendious way, that I am able to give you, is to receive me into your hearts by faith; do this, and you do all in one. *This is the work,* that is *instar omnium,* all you do is undone, and yourselves also, till this be done, for which you shall have as much thanks at God's hands, as if you could keep the whole Law; indeed it is accepted in lieu of it. *Unto him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness,* Rom. iv. 5. where, he that worketh not, is not meant a slothful lazy sinner, that hath no list to work; nor a rebellious sinner, whose heart riseth against the work,

which the whole law of God would employ him in ; but the humbled sinner, who desires and endeavours to work, but is no way able to do the task, the law as a Covenant sets him; and therefore is said, in a law-sense, not to work, because he doth not work to the law's purpose, so as to answer its demands, which will accept nothing short of perfect obedience ; this man's faith on Christ is accepted for righteousness ; that is, God reckons him so, and so he shall pass at the great day by the judge's sentence, as if he had never trod one step awry from the path of the law. Now, if faith be the work of God above all other, then unbelief is the work of the devil, and that which he had rather thou shouldest do, than drink or drab ; and despair is unbelief at the worst : unbelief among sins, is as the plague among diseases, the most dangerous ; but when it riseth to despair, then it is as the plague, with the tokens appearing, that bring the certain message of death with them. Unbelief is despair in the bud, despair is unbelief at its full growth.

SECT. II.

Secondly, Despair hath a way peculiar to itself, of dishonouring God above other sins. Every sin wounds the law, and the name of God through the law. But this wound is healed when the penitent sinner by faith comes to Christ, and closeth with him. God makes account, reparations now are fully made (through Christ, whom the believer receives) for the wrong done to his law, and his name vindicated from the dishonour cast upon it by the creature's former iniquities; yea, that it appears more glorious, because it is illustrious, by the shining forth of one title of honour, (not the least prized by God himself) his forgiving mercy, which could not have been so well known to the creature, if not drawn drawn forth into act upon this occasion. But, what would you say of such a prodigious sinner, that when he hath wounded the law, is not willing to have it healed ? When he hath dishonoured God, and that in an high provoking manner, is not willing the dirt he hath cast on God's face, should be wiped off? methinks your colour rises at the reading of this, against such a wretch, and you asking, as once

once *Ahashuerus* did *Esther, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?* Esther vii. 5. Would you know? Truly the adversary and enemy is this wicked despair. The despairing soul is the person that will not let Christ make satisfaction for the wrong, that by his sins he hath done God. Suppose a man should wound another dangerously in his passion, and when he hath done, will not let a surgeon come near to cure the wound he hath made. Every one would say, his last act of cruelty was worse than his first. O my soul, (saith faith) thou didst ill, yea, very ill, in breaking the holy laws of God, and dishonouring the name of the great God of heaven and earth thereby; let thy heart ache for this. But thou dost far worse by thy despairing of mercy. In this act thou rejectest Christ, and keep him from satisfying the justice of the law that is injured by thee, and from redeeming the honour of his name from the reproach thy sins have scandalized it with. What language speaks thy despair, but this? Let God come by his right and honour as he can, thou wilt never be an instrument active in the helping of him to it, by believing on Christ, in whom he may fully have them with advantage. O what shame would despair put the mercy of God to in the sight of Satan his worst enemy? He claps his hands at this, to see all the glorious attributes of God served alike, and divested of their honour. This is meat and drink to him. That cursed spirit desires no better music, than to hear the soul ring the promises, like bells, backward; make no other use of them, than to confirm it in its own desperate thoughts of its damnation, and to tell it, hell-fire is kindled in its conscience, which no mercy in God will or can quench to eternity. As the bloody *Jews* and *Roman* soldiers, exercised their cruelty on every part almost of Christ's body, crowning his head with thorns, goring his side with a spear, and fastening his hands and feet with nails: so the despairing sinner deals with the whole name of God. He doth, as it were, put a mock-crown on the head of his wisdom, setting it all to naught, and charging it foolishly, as if the method of salvation was not laid with prudence, by the all-wise God. He nails the hands of his almighty power, while he thinks his sins are of that nature, as put him out of the reach, and beyond the power of God to save him. He pierceth the tender bowels of God's mercy, when he cannot see

see enough in him to persuade him to hope for any favour or forgiveness at his hands. In a word, the despairing soul transfixeth his very heart and will, while he unworthily frames notions of God, as if he were unwilling to the work of mercy, and not so inclined to exercise acts of pardon and forgiveness on poor sinners, as the word declares him. Despair basely mis-reports him to the soul, as if he were a lame God, and had no feet (affections I mean) to carry him to such a work as forgiving sin. Now what does the sum of all this amount to, (if you can without horror and amazement stand to cast it up, and consider the weight of those circumstances which aggravate the flagitiousness of this unparalled fact) surely it riseth to no less than the highest attempt that the creature can make for the murdering of God himself; for the infinitude of God's wisdom, power, mercy, and all his atrributes, are more intrinsical to the essence and being of God, than the heart-blood is to the life of a mortal man? Shall he that lets out the heart-blood of a man, yea, but attempts to do it, be a murderer, (especially if he be a prince or king, the design is against) and deservedly suffer as such? and shall not he much more be counted and punished as the worst of all murderers, that attempts to take away the life of God; (though his arm and dagger be too short for the purpose) by taking from him in his thoughts, the infinitude of those attributes, which are (as I may say) the very life of God? Surely God will neither part with the glory, nor suffer the dishonour of his name, at the hands of his sorry creature; but will engage all his attributes for the avenging himself on the wretch that attempts it. O tremble therefore at despair! Nothing makes thy face gather blackness, and thy soul hasten faster to the complexion of damned souls, than this; now thou sinnest after the similitude of those that are in hell.

SECT. III.

Thirdly, Despair strengthens and enrageth all other sins in the soul. None fight so fiercely, as those who look for no quarter. They think themselves dead men, therefore they

they will sell their lives as dear as they can. *Samson* despaired ever getting out of the *Philistines'* hands, (his eyes being now lost, and he unfit to make an escape) what doth he meditate, now his case is desperate, but his enemies ruin? He cares not though he pulls the house on his own head, so it may but fall on the *Philistines* also. *Absalom*, when by the cursed counsel of *Ahitophel*, he had (as he thought) made himself so hateful to *David*, as to put him past all hope of being treated with, then breaks out with an high rage, and seeks the ruin of his royal father with fire and sword. So cruel a thing is despair, it teaches to shew no respect where it looks for none. But most clearly it appears in the Devil himself, who knowing himself to be exempted from pardon, sins with a rage as high as heaven; and the same sin hath the same effects in men that it hath in the devil, according to the degrees of it that are found in them, *Jer.* xviii. 11. 12. *They said there is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices.* Did you never see a sturdy beggar, (after a while knocking at a door, and concluding by the present silence, or denial, that he shall have nothing given him) fall into a cursing and railing of them that dwell there? even such foul language doth despair learn the sinner to belch out against the God of heaven; if despair enters, it is imposible to keep blasphemy out; pray therefore, and do thy utmost to repel this dart, lest it soon set thy soul on a flame with this hell-fire of blasphemy. Hear, O souls smitten for sin, that spend your lives in sighs, sobs, and tears, for your horrid enemies; would you again be seen fighting against God as fierce as ever? as you would not take heed of despair. If thou once thinkest that God's heart is hardened against thee, thy heart will not be long hardening against him. And this (by the way) may administer comfort to the thoughts of some gracious, but troubled souls, who can find no faith that they have; yea, who are oft reckoning themselves among despairers. Let me ask thee, who art in this sad condition, this one thing; Canst thou find any love breathing in thy heart towards God, though thou canst find no breath of love coming at present from him to thee? And art thou tender and fearful of sinning against him, even while thou seemest to thy own thoughts to hope for no mercy from him? if so, be of good comfort; thy faith may be weak, but thou art far from being under the power of despair;

pair ; desperate souls do not reserve any love for God, or care to please him. There is some faith surely in thy soul, which is the cause of these motions, though (like the spring in a watch) it be itself unseen, when the other graces moved by it are visible.

SECT. IV.

The greatness of this sin of despair appears in this, that the least sin invenomed by it is unpardonable : and without this, the greatest is pardonable. That must needs of all sins be most abominable, which makes the creature incapable of mercy. *Judas* was not damned merely for his treason and murder ; for others, that had their hands deep in the same horrid fact, obtained a pardon, by faith in that blood which through cruelty they shed ; but they were these, heightened into the greatest malignity possible, from the putrid stuff of despair and final impenitency, with which his wretched heart was filled, that he died so miserably of, and now is infinitely more miserably damned for.

Ephes. vi. 17.

And take the Helmet of Salvation:

THESE words present us with another piece in the Christian's Panoply. A Helmet to cover his head in the day of battle. It makes the fifth in the Apostle's order. And which is observable, this with most of the pieces in this magazine are defensive arms, and all to defend the Christian from sin, none to secure him from suffering.

First, They are most defensive arms. Indeed there is but one of all the pieces in the whole Panoply for offence, i. e. The Sword. It may be to give us this hint, that this spiritual war of the Christian lies chiefly on the defence, and therefore

therefore requires arms most of this kind to wage it. God hath deposited a rich treasure of grace in every Saint's heart; at this is the Devil's great spite, to plunder him of which, and with it of his happiness, he commenceth a bloody war against him; so that the Christian overcomes his enemy, when himself is not overcome by him: his work being rather to keep what is his own, than to get what his is enemy's. And truly this thing well heeded, that the Saint's war lies chiefly on the defence, would be of singular use to direct the Christian how to manage his combats, both with Satan, and his instruments. First, With Satan. Look Christian, thou standest always in a defensive posture with thy armour on, as a soldier upon thy works, ready to defend the castle of thy soul, which God hath set thee to keep, and valiantly to repel Satan's assaults, whenever he make his approach. But be not persuaded out of the line of thy place and calling. No, not under the specious pretence of zeal, and hope to get the greater victory by falling into the enemies quarters. Let Satan be the assailant and come if he will to tempt thee, but go not thou in a bravado to tempt him to do it. It is just he should be foiled, that seeks his own danger. This got *Peter* his fall in the High-Priest's hall, who was left therefore cowardly to deny his master, that he might learn humbly to deny himself ever after. Secondly, With Satan's instruments. May be they revile and reproach thee. Remember now thy part lies on the defence. Give not railing for railing, reproach for reproach. The gospel allows thee no liberty to use their weapons, and return them *quid* pro *quo*, 1 *Pet.* iii. 8, 9, *Be pitiful, be courteous, not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but, contrariwise, blessing.* Thou hast here a bridle and breast-plate to defend thee from their bullets; the comfort of thy own sincerity and holy walking, with which thou mayest wipe off the dirt thrown upon thy face, but no weapon for self-revenge. A shield is put into thy hand, which thou mayest lift up to quench their fiery darts, but no darts of bitter words to retort upon them. Thou art shod with peace, that thou mayest walk safely upon the injuries they do thee, without any prick or pain to thy spirit, but not with pride to trample upon the persons that wrong thee.

Secondly, As most of the pieces are defensive, so all of them to defend from sin, none to secure the Christian from

suffering. They are to defend him in suffering, not privilege him from it. He must prepare the more for suffering, because he is so well furnished with armour to bear it. Armour is not given for men to wear by the fire-side, but in the field. How shall the maker be praised if the metal of his arms be not known? and where shall it be put to the proof, but amidst swords and bullets? He that desires to live all his days in an isle of Providence, where the whole year is summer, will never make a good Christian. Resolve for hardship, or lay down thy arms. Here is the true reason why so few come at the beat of Christ's drum to his standard, and so many of those few that have listed themselves by an external profession under him, within a while drop away, and leave his colours; it is suffering work they are sick of. Most men are more tender of their skin, than conscience; and had rather the gospel had provided armour to defend their bodies from death and danger, than their souls from sin and Satan.

But I come to the words, *And take the Helmet of salvation*: In which we may observe,

First, The Copulative, which clasps this to the former piece, *and*

Secondly, the piece of armour itself, *The Helmet of salvation.*

CHAP. I.

Wherein the Concatenation of Graces, in their Birth, Growth, and Decay, is set forth.

Frist, THE Copulative (*And*) *And take,* That is, with the shield of faith, and all the other pieces of armour here set down, take this also into the field with you. See here how every grace is lovingly coupled to its fellow; and all at last, though many pieces, make but one suit. The note which this points at, is, The Concatenation of Graces.

Note,

Note, The sanctifying saving graces of God's spirit, are linked inseparably together; there is a connection of them one to the other, and that in their birth, growth, and decay.

SECT. I.

First, In their Birth. Where one sanctifying grace is, the rest are all to be found. It is not so in common gifts and graces, these are parcelled out, like the gifts *Abraham* bestowed on the children he had by his concubines, Gen. xxv. 6. One hath this gift, another hath that, none hath all. He that hath a gift of knowledge, may want a gift of utterance, and so of the rest. But sanctifying graces are like the inheritance he gave to *Isaac*; every true believer hath them all given him. *He that is in Christ is a new creature, and behold all things are become new,* 2 Cor. v. 17. Now the new creature contains all; as natural corruption is an universal principle of all sin that sours the whole lump of man's nature, so is sanctifying grace an universal principle that sweetly seasons, and renews the whole man at once, though not wholly. Grace comes, saith one, into the soul, as the soul into the body, at once. Indeed it grows by steps, but is born at once; the new creature hath all its parts formed together, though not its degrees; some one grace may be perceived to stir, and so come under the Christian's notice before another. He may feel his fear of God putting forth itself in a holy trembling at, and awe upon his spirit at the thoughts of God, before he sees his faith in the fiduciary recumbency of his soul upon God; yet the one grace is not in its production before the other. One part of the world hath been discovered to us long before the other; yet all the world was made together. Now this connection of graces in their birth, is of double use.

First, To relieve the sincere Christian when in doubt of his gracious state, because some one grace which he enquires for, cannot at present be discerned in his soul by him. Possibly it is faith thou hast been looking for, and it

is not at any hand to be heard of. Well Christian, do not presently unsaint thyself, till thou hast made further trial of thyself. Send out therefore thy spies to search for some other grace, as thy love to Christ; may be thou wilt hear some tidings of this grace though the other is not in view. Hath not thy love to God and Christ been seen by thee in such a temptation, chasing it away with *Joseph's* answer to his wanton mistress, *How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* Yea, mayest thou not see it all the day long, either in thy sincere care to please him, or hearty sorrow when thou hast done any thing that grieves him? in which two veins runs the life-blood of a soul's love to Christ. Now know to thy comfort, that thy love can tell the news of thy faith. As Christ said in another case, *He that hath seen me, hath seen my father*, John xiv. 9. so say I to thee, thou that hast seen thy love to Christ, hast seen thy faith in the face of thy love.

But may be, thy love to Christ is also lodged in a cloud. Well, then see whether thou canst spy no evangelical repentance, loathing thee with the sight of thy sins, as also in firing thee with revenge against them, as those enemies which drew thee into rebellion against God; yea, were the bloody weapons with which thou hast so oft wounded the name, and murdered the Son of God. Behold, the grace thou lookest far stands before thee; what is love to God, if zeal against sin, as God's enemy, be not? Did not *Abishai* love *David*, when his heart boilded so over with rage against *Shimei* for cursing *David*, that he could not contain, but breaks out in a passion, saying, *Why should this dead dog curse my Lord the King? let me go over I pray thee, and take off his head*, 2 Sam. xvi. 9. And by thy own acknowledgement, it troubles thee as much to hear thy lusts bark against God, and thy will is as good to be the death of them, if God would but say his *fiat* to it, as ever *Abishai's* was to strike that traitor's head off. And yet art thou in doubt whether thou lovest God or no? Truly, then thou canst not see love for zeal. Thus, as by taking hold of one link, you may draw up the rest of the chain that lies under water, so by discovering one grace, thou mayest bring all to sight. *Joseph* and *Mary* were indeed deceived, when they supposed their son to be in the company of their kindred, *Luke* ii. 44. but so canst thou not here: for this

holy

holy kindred of graces go together; they are knit as members of the body, one to another; though you see only the face of a man, yet you doubt not but the whole man is there.

Secondly, As it may relieve the sincere Christian, so it will help to uncase and put the hypocrite to shame, who makes great pretences to some one grace, when he hates another at the same time. A certain note of a false heart: He never had any grace that loves not all graces. *Moses* would not go out of *Egypt* with half his company, *Exod. x.* Either all must go, or none: Neither will the Spirit of God come into a soul with half his sanctifying graces, but all his train. If, therefore, thy heart be set against any one grace, it proves thou art a stranger to the rest; and though thou mayest seem a great admirer of one grace, yet the defiance thou standest in to others washeth off the paint of this fair cover: Love and hatred are of the whole kind; he that loves or hates one Saint, as such, doth the same by every Saint: So he that cordially closeth with one grace, will find every grace endeared to him, for they are as like one to another, as one sun-beam is to another.

SECT. II.

Secondly, Sanctifying graces are connected in their growth and decay; increase one grace, and you strengthen all; impair one, and you will be a loser in all; and the reason is, because they are reciprocally helpful to each other. So that when one grace is wounded, the assistance it would (if in temper) contribute to the Christian's common stock, is either wholly detained, or much lessened: When love cools, obedience slackens, and drives heavily, because it wants the oil on its wheel that love used to drop; obedience faultering, faith weakens; how can there be great faith, where there is little faithfulness? faith weakening, hope presently wavers; for it is the credit of faith's report, that hope goes on to expect good from God; and hope wavering, patience breaks, and can keep shop-windows open no longer, because it trades with the stock hope lends it. In the body you observe, there are many members, yet all make but one body;

and

and every member so useful, that the others are beholden to it: So in the Christian there are many graces, but one new creature; and the eye of knowledge cannot say to the hand of faith, I have no need of thee; nor the hand of faith to the foot of obedience; but all are preserved by the mutual care they have of one another; for, as ruin to the whole city may enter at a breach in one part of its wall, and the soul run out through a wound in a particular member of the body; so the ruin of all grace may, yea, must needs follow on the ruin of any one. There is, indeed, a stronger bond of necessity between graces of our souls, than there is between the members of our body. It is possible, yea ordinary for some member to be cut off from the body, without the death of the whole, because all the members of the body are not vital parts. But every grace is a vital part in the new creature, and so essential to its very being, that its absence cannot be supplied *per vicarium*. In the body, one eye can make a shift to do the office of its fellow which is put out; and one hand do the other's work that is cut off, though may be not so exactly; but faith cannot do the office of love, nor love the work of obedience; the lack of one wheel spoils the motion of the whole clock: And if one grace be wanting, the end would not be attained for which this rare piece of workmanship is set up in the Saint's heart.

First, Let it learn thee, Christian, this wisdom, whenever thou findest any grace weakened, either through thy negligence not tending it, or Satan's temptations wounding it, speedily to endeavour the recovery of it; because thou dost not only lose the comfort, which the exercise of this one grace might bring, but thou weakenest all the other.

Is he a bad husband, who hazards the fall of his house, by suffering a hole or two in the roof? What then art thou that puttest thy whole gracious state in danger, by neglecting a timely repair of the breach made in one of thy graces?

And so, when thou art tempted to any sin, look not on it as a single sin, but as having all other sins in its belly. Consider what thou dost, before thou gratifiest Satan in any one motion; for by one sin thou strengthenest the whole body of sin; give to one sin, and that will send more beggars to your door, and they will come with a stronger plea than the former; why mayest thou not do this for them as well as that? Thy best way is to keep the door shut to all, lest, while thou intendedst

intendest to entertain only one, all crowd in: But if it were possible that thou couldest break this connexion of sin, so as to take off one link that pleaseth thee best, and not draw the whole chain after thee by committing this, yet know there is a connection of guilt also, James ii. 10. *Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.* As he that administereth to the estate of one deceased, though it be never so little that he takes into his hands, becomes liable to pay all his debts; and brings all his creditors upon him: So by tampering but with one sin, and that a little one, thou bringest the whole law upon thy back, which will arrest thee upon God's suit, as a transgressor of all its commands. Thus the law is copulative; an affront done to one, redounds to the dishonour of all, and so is resented by God the law-giver, whose authority is equally in all.

Secondly, This may comfort those who trouble themselves with the thoughts of future changes which may befal them; and what shall they do then, say they? Now, blessed be God, they make a shift to serve God in their place; but what if streights come? Poverty, sickness or other crosses? How shall they then behave? Where is their faith, patience, and other suffering graces, that should enable them to walk on these waves without sinking? They fear, alas! little of these suffering graces is in their hands. Well, Christian, for thy encouragement know, if the graces of thy present condition (those I mean which God calls thee to exercise now in thy prosperous state) be lively, thou mayest comfortably hope the other suffering graces, which now stand unseen behind the curtain, will do the same, when God changeth the scene of thy affairs, and calls them upon the stage to act their part. The more humble thou art now with thy abundance, the more patient thou wilt certainly shew thyself in thy penury; so much as thy heart is now above the world's enjoyments, even so much thou wilt then be above the troubles and sorrows of it. Trees grow proportionably under-ground, to what they do above: And the Christian will find something like this in his graces.

CHAP

CHAP. II.

Of the Nature of Hope, why stiled Hope of Salvation, and why compared to an Helmet.

WE have done with the connective particle, whereby this piece is coupled to the former, and now come to address our discourse to the piece of armour itself, *Take the Helmet of Salvation.*

Though we have not here, as in all the other, the grace expressed, yet we need not be at a loss for it, if we consult another place, where our Apostle lends us a key to decypher his meaning in this; 1 Thess. v. 8. *And for an Helmet, the Hope of Salvation:* So that, without any scruple, we shall fasten upon the grace of *Hope,* as intended by the Holy Ghost in this place.

Now, in order to a treatise of this grace, it is requisite that something be said by explication, that may serve as a light set up in the entry, to lead us the better into the several rooms of the point, which is to be the subject of our discourse: And this I shall do by shewing,

SECT. I.

First, A little to open the nature of this grace of hope, which will be best done by laying down a plain description of it, and briefly explicating the parts.

Hope is a supernatural grace of God, whereby the believer, through Christ, expects and waits for all those good things of the promise, which at present he hath not fully received.

First, Here is the author or efficient of it, *God,* who is called *the God of all grace,* 1 Peter v. 10.; that is, the giver and worker of all grace, both as to the first seed, and further growth of it. It is impossible for the creature to make the least pile of grass, or being made, to make it grow: And as impossible

impossible to produce the least seed of grace in the heart, or to add one cubit to the stature of it. No, as God is the *Father of the rain*, by which the herbs in the fields spring and grow, so also of those spiritual dews and influences, that must make every grace thrive and flourish. The Apostle teacheth us this, when he prays that *God would perfect, establish, strengthen, settle them:* And as of all grace in general, so of this in particular, *Rom.* xv. 13. where he is stiled the *God of Hope;* and by whom we abound in hope also.

Secondly, It is supernatural, and thereby distinguished from the Heathen's hope, which, with the rest of their moral virtues, so far as any excellency were found in them, came from God (to whom every man that cometh into the world, is beholden for all the light he hath, *John* i. 9.), and is but the remains of man's first noble principles; as sometimes we shall see a broken turret or two stand in the midst of the ruins of some stately palace demolished, that serves for little more than to help the spectator to give a guess what goodly buildings once stood there.

Secondly, Hope's subject; *The believer.* True hope is a jewel that none wears but Christ's bride; a grace with which none is graced, but the believer's soul; *Christless* and *hopeless*, are joined together, *Ephes.* ii. 12. And here it is not amiss, to observe the order in which hope stands to faith: In regard of time, they are not one before another; but in order of nature and operation, faith hath the precedency of hope.

First, Faith closeth with the promise as a true and faithful word, then hope lifts up the soul to wait for the performance of it; who goes out to meet him, that he believes will not come? The promise is as it were God's love-letter to his church and spouse, in which he opens his very heart, and tells all he means to do for her: Faith reads and embraceth it with joy, whereupon the believing soul by hope looks out at this window with a longing expectation to see her husband's chariot come in the accomplishment thereof: So *Paul* gives a reason of his own hope from his faith, *Acts* xxiv. 14, 15. and prays for the *Romans* faith, in order to their hope, *Rom.* xv. 13.

Thirdly, Hope's object.

First, In general, something *that is good;* if a thing be evil, we fear and fly from it; if good, we hope and wait for it.

it. And here is one note of difference between it and faith; faith believes evil as well as good; hope is conversant only about good.

Secondly, It is the good of the promise; and in this faith and hope agree; both their lines are drawn from the same centre of the promise. Hope without a promise, is like an anchor without ground to hold by; it bears the promise on its name, Acts xxvi. 6. *I stand and am judged* (saith *Paul*) *for the hope of the promise:* So *David* shews where he moors his ship, and casts his anchor, *I hope in thy Word*, Psalm cxix. 81. True hope will trade only for true good. And we can call nothing, so that the good God hath not promised; for the promise runs thus, *No good thing will he with-hold from them that walk uprightly*, Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

Thirdly, *All the good things of the promise.* As God hath encircled all good in the promise, so he hath promised nothing but good; and therefore hope's object is all that the promise holds forth; only as the matter of the promise hath more degrees of goodness, so hope longs more earnestly for it. God is the chief good, and the fruition of him is promised as the utmost happiness of the creature: Therefore true hope takes her chief aim at God, and makes after all other promises in a subserviency to lift the soul nearer unto him. He is called, *The hope of Israel*, Jer. xvii. 13. There is nothing beyond God, the enjoying of which the believer projects; and nothing short of God that he can be content with. Now, because God is only enjoyed fully and securely in Heaven's blissful state, therefore it is called, *the hope of glory*, Col. i. 2, 7. *of eternal life*, Tit. iii. 7. *and salvation*, 1 Thess. v. 7.

Lastly, The object of hope is the good of the promise, not in hand, *but yet to be performed. Hope that is seen, is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?* Rom. viii. 24. Futurity is intrinsical to hope's object, and distinguisheth it from faith, which gives a present being to the promise, and is *the substance of things hoped for*, Heb. xi. 1. The good of the promise hath a kind of subsistence by faith in the soul; it brings the Christian and Heaven together, as if he were there already; hence they are said by faith to embrace the promise, *Heb.* xi. 13. as two friends when they meet; faith speaks in the present tense, *We are conquerors, yea, we are more than conquerors.* Partial performance

formance of the promise intends hope; but complete, ends hope, and swallows it up in love and joy. Indeed, either the full performance of the promise, or execution of the threatening, shuts out all hope. In Heaven the promise is paid, and hope dismissed, because we have what was looked for; and in hell the threatening is fully inflicted, and therefore no hope to be found among the damned, because no possibility of release.

Fourthly, Hope's aid, by whose help, and for whose sake it expects to obtain the promise, and that is Jesus Christ; it waits for all in and through him; he is therefore called *our hope*, 1 Tim. i. 1. because through him we hope for what is promised, both by whose death we have leave and liberty to expect good from God, and by whose spirit we have ability to hope; so that both the authority and strength to hope, comes from Christ; the former by the effusion of his blood for us, the latter by the infusion of his spirit into us.

SECT. II.

Secondly, Why is the Christian's hope stiled, *A hope of salvation?*

A double reason is obvious.

First, Because salvation comprehends and takes within its circle the whole object of his hope. Salvation imports such a state of bliss, wherein meet eminently the mercies and enjoyments of all the promises, scattered some in one, and some in another; as at the creation, the light which was first diffused through the firmament, was gathered afterward into the sun. Cast up the particular sums of all the good things promised in the covenant, and the total they amount unto is salvation. The *ultima unitas* gives the denomination to the number, because it comprehends all; so salvation, the ultimate object of the Christian's expectation, and that which comprehends the rest, denominates his *hope*.

Secondly, It is called *a hope of salvation*, to distinguish it from the worldling's hope, whose portion (*Psalm* xvii.) is in this life, and so his hope also. It is confessed, that many of these pretend to a hope of salvation; but the truth is, they neither have right to it, nor are they very eager of it. They

think themselves so well seated in this world, that if they might have their wish, it should be, that God would not remove them hence. Even when they say, they hope to be saved, their consciences tell them they had rather stay here, than part with this world, in hope to mend themselves in the other. They blow up themselves into a hope and desire of salvation, more out of a dread of Hell, than liking of Heaven. None I think so mad among them, but had rather be saved than damned; live in Heaven, than lie in Hell; yet they like this world better than all.

SECT. III.

The third enquiry is, Why *hope* is compared to a *helmet?*

First, The *helmet* defends the head, a principal part of the body, from bullet and sword: So this *hope of salvation* defends the soul, the principal part of man, and the principal faculties of that, whereby no dangerous impression can by Satan or sin be made on it. Temptations may trouble, but cannot hurt, except their darts enter the will, and leave a wound there, by drawing it to some consent and liking of them; from which this *helmet of hope*, if it be of the right make, and sits sure on the Christian's head, will defend him. It is hard to draw him into any treasonable practice against his prince, who is both well satisfied of his favour at present, and stands also upon the stairs of hope, expecting assuredly to be called up within a while to the highest preferment that the court can afford, or his king give. No, the weapons of rebellion and treason are usually forged and fashioned in Discontent's shop. When subjects take themselves to be neglected and slighted by their prince, think their preferments are now at an end, and must look for no favours to come from him; this softens them to receive every impression of disloyalty that any enemy to the king shall attempt to stamp them with; as in the *Israelites*, who thinking the men of *Judah* (of whose tribe the king was) had got a monopoly of his favour, and themselves shut out from sharing, equally, with them therein; how soon are they, even at a blast or two of *Sheba*'s seditious trumpet, made rebels against their sovereign? *We have no part in David*

David (saith *Sheba*) *neither have we any inheritance in the son of Jesse; every man to his tents, O Israel,* 2 Sam. xx. 1. And see how this treason runs, even like a squib upon a rope, *ver.* 2. *Every man of Israel went up from after David, and followed Sheba.* Thus, if once the soul fears it hath no part in God, and expects no inheritance from him, I know no sin so great, but it may be drawn to commit.

Secondly, As the helmet defends the soldier's head from wounding, so his heart also from swooning. It makes him bold and fearless in battle, though amidst swords and bullets. *Goliah* with his helmet of brass and other furniture, how confidently and daringly did the man come on? as if he had been so enclosed in his armour, that it was imposible any weapon could come near to deliver a message of death unto him. This made him carry his crest so high, and defy a whole host, till at last he paid his life for his pride and folly. But here is a helmet, that whoever wears it, need never be put to shame for his holy boasting. God himself allows him so to do, and will bear him out in this rejoicing of his hope, *Isaiah* xlix. 23. *They shall not be ashamed that wait for me.* This made holy *David* so undaunted in the midst of his enemies, *Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear,* Psalm xxvii. 3. His hope would not suffer his heart so much as beat within him, for any fear of what they could do to him: he had his helmet of salvation on, and therefore he saith, *ver.* 6. *Mine head shall be lifted up above mine enemies round about me.* A man cannot drown so long as his head is above water. Now it is the proper office of hope to do this for the Christian in times of any danger; *Luke* xxi. 28. *When these things come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh.* A strange time, one would think, for Christ then to bid his disciples lift up their heads in, when they see *other men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth,* ver. 26. yet now is the time of the rising of their sun, when others is setting, and blackness of darkness overtaking them; because now the Christian's feast is coming, for which hope hath saved its stomach so long, *Your redemption draweth nigh.*

Two things make the head hang down, fear, and shame; hope easeth the Christian's heart of both these, and so forbids

forbids him to give any sign of a desponding mind by a dejected countenance.

I come now to lay down the one general point of doctrine, from which our whole discourse on this piece of armour shall be drawn.

CHAP. III.

Of the Use of Hope in the Christian's Warfare, and of the high and noble Exploits it raiseth the Christian to undertake.

THAT hope is a grace of singular use and service to us all along our spiritual warfare and Christian course. We are directed to *take the helmet of salvation :* and this is not for some particular occasion, and then hang it by, till another extraordinary streight calls us to take it down, and use it again : but we must take it so as never to lay it aside, till God shall take off this helmet, to put on a crown of glory in the room of it. *Be sober, and hope to the end,* is the Apostle *Peter's* counsel, 1 *Pet.* i. 13. There are some engines of war that are of use but now and then, as ladders for scaling of a town or fort, which done, are laid aside for a long time, and not missed.

But the *helmet* is of continual use. We shall need it as long as our war with sin and Satan lasts. The Christian is not beneath hope, so long as above ground ; nor above hope, so long as he is beneath Heaven. Indeed, when once he enters the gates of that glorious city, then farewel hope, and welcome love, for ever, he may say with the holy martyr. Armour becomes earth, but robes heaven. Hope goes into the field, and waits on the Christian till the last battle be fought, and the field cleared, and then faith and hope together carry him in the chariot of the promise to Heaven's door, where they deliver up his soul into the hands of love and

and joy, which stand ready to conduct him into the blissful presence of God.

But that I may speak more particularly of hope's serviceableness to the Christian, and the several offices it performeth for him; I shall reduce all to four heads.

First, Hope of salvation puts the Christian upon high and and noble exploits. It is a grace born for great actions. Faith and hope are the two poles on which all the Christian's noble enterprizes turn. As carnal hope excites carnal men to their atchievements which gain them renown in the world, so is this heavenly hope influential into the saint's undertakings. What makes the merchant sell house and land, and ship his whole estate away to the other end of the world, and this amidst a thousand hazards from pirates, waves and winds, but hope to get a greater by this bold adventure! What makes the daring soldier rush into the furious battle, upon the very mouth of death itself, but hope to snatch honour and spoil out of its jaws! Hope in his helmet, shield, and all, which makes him laugh on the face of all danger. In a word, what makes the scholar beat his brains so hard, sometimes with the hazard of breaking them, by over-straining his part with too eager and hot a pursuit of learning, but hope of commencing some degrees higher in the knowledge of those secrets in nature that are locked up from vulgar understanding! who, when he hath attained his desire, is paid but little better for all his pains and study, that have worn nature in him to the stumps, than he is that tears the flesh off his hands and knees with creeping up some craggy mountain, which prove but a barren, bleak place, to stand in, and wraps him up in the clouds from the sight of others, leaving him little more to please himself with but this, That he can look over other men's heads, and see a little further than they. Now if these peddling hopes can prevail with men to such fixed resolutions for the obtaining of these poor, sorry things, which borrow part of their goodness from men's fancy and imaginations, how much more effectual must the Christian's hope of eternal life be to provoke him to the atchievment of more noble exploits, let a few instances suffice.

SECT.

SECT. I.

First, This hope raiseth in the Christian an heroic resolution against those lusts that held him before in bondage. The *Israelites* who couched so tamely under their *Egyptian* burthens, without any attempt made by them to shake off the oppressor's yoke; when *Moses* came from God to give them hope of an approaching salvation, and his report had gained some credit by them, what a mighty change the impressionof their new-conceived hope made upon them! On a sudden their mettle returns, and their blood, that anguish and despair had so long chilled, grows warm again. They who before hardly durst let their groans be heard, (so cowed were their spirits with hard labour) now, fortified with hope break open their prison doors, and march out of *Egypt* towards the place of rest promised, maugre all the power and wrath of enraged *Pharoah*, who pursued them. Truly, thus it is with a soul in regard of sin's bondage. O how impotent and poor spirited is a soul void of this heavenly hope! what a tame slave hath Sátan of him! he is the foot-stool for every base lust to trample upon. He suffers the devil to back and ride him whither he pleaseth, without winching. No puddle so filthy, but Satan may draw him through with a thread: the poor wretch is well enough contented with his ignoble servitude, because he knows no better master than him he serves, nor better wages than the swill of his sensual pleasures which his lusts allow him; but let the news of salvation come to the ear of this sin-deluded soul, and a spiritual eye be given him to see the transcendant glory thereof, with a crevice of hope set open to him, that he is the person that shall inherit it, if willing to make an exchange of Satan for Christ, and of the slavery of his lusts, for the liberty of his Redeemer's service; O what havock then doth the soul begin to make among his lusts! he presently vows the death of them all, and sets his head at work how he may soonest and most effectually rid his hands of them, *Every man that hath this hope, purifieth himself, even as he is pure,* 1 John iii. 3. He now looks upon his lusts with no better eye, than a captive prince would do on his cruel keepers, out of whose hands could he make his escape, he should presently enjoy his

his crown and kingdom ; and therefore meditates his utmost revenge upon them. There may be some hasty purposes taken up by carnal men against their lusts, upon some accidental discontent they meet with now and then in the prosecution of them; but, alas, the swords they draw against them are soon in their sheaths again, and all the seeming fray comes to nothing in the end. They, like *Esau*, go out full and angry, but a present comes from their lusts that bribes them from hurting them ; yea, so reconciles them to them, that as he did by his brother, they can fall upon the necks of those lusts, to kiss them, which, awhile before they threatened to kill, and all for want of a true hope of Heaven. He that hath a mind to provide himself with arguments to arm him against sin's motions, need not go far to seek them : but he that handles this one well, and drives it home to the head, will not need many more. What is the sin this would not prostrate? Art thou tempted to any sensual lust? Ask thy hope what thou lookest to be in heaven. And canst thou yield to play the beast on earth, who hopest to be made like the pure and holy angels in Heaven ! is it a sin of profit which bewitcheth thee? Is not hope of Heaven a spell strong enough to charm this Devil? Can gold bear any sway with thee, thou that hopest to be heir of that city where gold bears no price? Wherefore is that blissful place said to be paved with gold, but to let us know, it shall be there trampled upon as of no account? and wilt thou let it now lie in thy heart, that will e're long be laid under thy feet? Is it a sin of revenge? dost thou not hope for a day when thy dear Saviour will plead thy cause ? and what needest thou then take his work out of his hand ? Let him be his own judge, that hath no hope ; the Judge, when he comes, will take thy part.

SECT. II.

Secondly, This hope ennobles and enables the Christian to condemn the present world, with all its pomp, treasure, and pleasure, to which the rest of the sons of men are basely enslaved. When once faith makes discovery of land that the Christian hath lying in Heaven, and by hope he begins to lot upon it, as that which he shall shortly take up at his re-

move from earth: truly then the price of this world's felicity falls low in his account; he can sell all his hopes from it very cheap, yea, he can part with what he hath in hand of this world's growth (when God calls him to it) more freely than *Alexander* did the cities he took; because when all this is gone, he shall leave himself a better hope than that great Monarch had to live upon. The hopes of Heaven leave a blot upon the world in the Christian's thoughts. It is no more now to him, than the asses were to anointed *Saul*. Story tells us of some *Turks*, who have upon the sight of *Mahomet's* tomb put their eyes out, that they might not defile them, forsooth, with any common object, after they had been blessed with seeing one so sacred. I am sure many a gracious soul there hath been, who by a prospect of Heaven's glory, set before the eye of their faith, have been so ravished with the sight, that they have desired God even to seal up their eyes by death, with *Simeon*, who would not by his good will have lived a day after that blessed hour in which his eyes had beheld the salvation of God. *Abraham* was under the hope of this salvation, and therefore, *he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, for he looked for a city, which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God*, Heb. xi. 9. 10. *Canaan* would have liked him well enough, if God had not told him of a Heaven that he meant to give him, in comparison to which, *Canaan* is now but *Cabul*, a dirty land in his judgment. So *Paul* tells us not only the low thoughts he hath himself of the world, but as they agree with the common sense of all believers, whose hope is come to any settlement; *for our conversation is in Heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour*, Phil. iii. 20. Mark, he sets the Saint with his back upon earth; and draws his reason from their hope, *from whence we look, &c.* Indeed he that looks on heaven, must needs look off earth. The soul's eye can as little as the body's, be above and below at the same time. Every man converseth most where he hopes to receive his greatest advantage. The Publican sits at the receipt of custom, there comes in his gains: The courtier stands at his Prince's elbow: The merchant, you must look for in his warehouse, or at the exchange: But the Christian's hope carries him by all these doors; here is not my hope, saith the soul, and therefore not my haunt: My hope is in Heavea,

ven, from whence I look for the Saviour, and my salvation to come with him; there I live, walk and wait. Nothing but a stedfast, well-grounded hope of salvation ban buy off the creature's worldly hopes. The heart of man cannot be in this world without a hope; and if it hath no hope for Heaven, it must of necessity take in at earth, such as it can afford. What can suit an earthly heart better than an earthly hope? And that which is a man's hope, though poor and peddling, is highly prized, and hardly parted with; as we see in a man like to drown, and hath only some weed by the banks side to hold by, will die with it in his hand rather than let go; he will endure blows and wounds, rather than lose his hold: Nothing can take him from it, but that which he hopes my serve better to save him from drowning.

Thus it is with a man whose hope is set upon the world, and whole happiness expected from thence; O how such an one hugs and hangs about the world! you may as soon persuade a fox to come out of his hole, where he hath taken sanctuary from the dogs, as such an one to cast off his hopes! no, he is undone without this pelf, and that honour; it is that he hath laid up his hopes in, and hope and life are kept in the same hand; scare and threaten him with what you will, still the man's heart will hold its own: Yea, throw Hell-fire into his bosom, and tell him this love of the world, and making Gold his hope, will damn him another day, still he will hold to his way. *Felix* is an instance for this, *Acts* xxiv. 26. *Paul* preached a thundering sermon before him; and though the preacher was at the bar, and *Felix* on the bench, yet God so armed the word, that he trembled to hear the prisoner *speak of righteousness, and judgment to come:* Yet this man, notwitstanding his conscience was struggling with the fears of judgment, and some sparks of divine vengeance had taken fire on him, could at the same time be sending out his heart on a covetous errand, to look for a bribe, for want of which he left that blessed servant of God in his bloody enemies hands; for *ver.* 26. it is said, *He hoped that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him:* But he missed his market; for as a sordid hope of a little money made him basely refuse to deliver *Paul,* so the blessed hope which *Paul* had for ano-

ther world, made him more honourably disdain to purchase his deliverance at his hands with a bribe.

SECT. III.

Thirdly, This hope of salvation where it is stedfast, makes the Christian active and zealous for God. It is called *A lively hope,* 1 Pet. i. 3. They are men of mettle that have it; you may expect more from him than many others, and not be deceived. Why are men dull and heavy in the service of God? Truly because their hopes are so. Hopeless and lifeless go together. No marvel the work goes hardly off-hand, when men have no hope to be well paid for their labour. He that thinks he works for a song, will not sing at his work (I mean, forward in it.) The best customer is sure to be served best and first; and him we count the best customer that we hope will be the best pay-master: If God be thought so, we will leave all to do his business. This made *Paul* engage so deeply in the service of the Gospel, even to lose his worldly friends, and lay his own life to stake; it was *for the hope of the promise,* Acts xxvi. 6. This made the other *Israelites* that feared God, follow the trade of *Godliness* so close, *ver.* 7. *Unto which promise, our twelve Tribes instantly serving God day and night, hope to come.* Mark, they are both instant and constant, they run with full speed, stretching themselves forth as in a race, and this night and day; no stop nor halting: And what is it keeps them in breath? even the hope that they shall at last come to that salvation promised. Nothing better to clear the soul of this dull phlegm of sloth, and listlessness of spirit in the service of God, than hope well improved and strengthened. It is the very physic which the apostle perscribes for this disease, *Heb.* vi. 11, 12. *We desire every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end, that ye be not slothful.*

SECT. IV.

Fourthly, Hope begets in a Christian a holy impatience after further attainments, especially when it grows to some strength;

strength : The higher our hopes of salvation rise, the more will our hearts widen themselves in holy desires, *Rom.* viii. 23. *Not only they, but we ourselves also which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.* Methinks rejoicing would better become them for what they had already, than groaning for what they have not. Who may better stay long for their dinner, than they who have their stomachs stayed with a good break-fast ? This would hold in bodily food, but not spiritual. No doubt, the sweetness which they tasted from their first fruits in hand did cheer their spirits ; but the thoughts of what was behind, made them groan. Hope waits for all, and will not let the soul sit down contented, till all the dishes be on the board, till the whole harvest that stands on the field of the promise, be reaped ; yea, the more the Christian hath received in partial payments, the deeper groans hope makes the soul fetch for what is behind : And that,

First, Because these fore-tastes acquaint the Christian more with the nature of those joys which are in Heaven, and so enlarge his understanding, to have more raised conceptions of the felicity those enjoy that are arrived there : And the increasing of his knowledge must needs enlarge his desires, and those desires break out into sad groans, to think what sweet wine is drank in full bowls by glorified Saints, and he live where only a sip is allowed, that doth not satisfy, but kindle his thirst. It is harder now for him to live on this side Heaven, than before he knew so much. He is like one that stands at the door where company sit at a rich feast ; he hears how merry they are ; through the key-hole he sees what variety they have ; and by a little which he licks from the trenchers brought out, is sensible how delicious their fare is : O how such a one's teeth would water after their cheer, which another misseth not, that hears not of it, or only hears, and tastes not of their dainties! the nearer the soul stands to Heaven, and the more he knows of their joys, the more he blesseth them, and pities himself. None long for Heaven more than those who enjoy most of Heaven ; all delays now are exceedingly tedious. Their continual moan is, *Why is his Chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of his Chariot?* The last year is thought longer by the apprentice, than all his

his time before; because now it is nearer out; and if delays be so tedious, what then are desertions to such a soul, who hath had his hopes of salvation raised high, by the sweet illapses of the Spirit, and fore tastes of glory! No doubt *Moses*, his death so nigh *Canaan*, after he had tasted of the fruit of the land at the spy's hand, was exceeding grievous. To lose a child grown up, when we seem ready to reap our hopes conceived of him, is more than to part with two in the cradle, that have not yet drawn out our expectations. The Christian, indeed, cannot quite lose his hopes, yet he may have them nipped, as a forward spring, by after-claps of winter weather, which pinches so much the more, because the warm beams of the sun had made the herbs come forth and disclose themselves: And so desertions from God make the saddest impression upon those above all others, whose expectation had advanced far, and by the present sense of divine goodness, been unfolded into a kind of rejoicing through hope of glory; now to meet with a damp from the frowns of the Almighty, and to be benighted by the withdrawing of that light which so ravished it, how dreadful must this sudden change be.

Secondly, These present attainments of grace or comfort embolden the soul to expect yet more, and so provoke the Christian to press on for the full payment of all: See both these in *David*, Psalm lxiii. 7. *Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.* The present boon he hath got, makes him rejoice in hope of what is yet to come, and by this scent he is carried out with full cry to pursue the chase for more, as appears in the next words, *ver.* 8. *My soul followeth hard after thee.* And no wonder, if we consider, that God gives his people their experiences with this very notion stamped on them, *i. e.* to raise their expectations for further mercies at his hand, *Hos.* ii. 15. *I will give her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope.* God is there speaking to a soul converted and newly taken into covenant, what blessings he will bestow on it, as the happy effects of its reconciliation to God, and marriage with Christ, and he alludes to his dealing with *Israel*, who came out of a desolate wilderness into a pleasant fruitful country, in the very entrance whereof this *Achor* lay; which when God gave them, he would not have them look on it, as in itself it was a little

spot

spot of ground, and not so much worth, but as the opening of a door through which he would undertake to let them into the possession of the whole land in process of time; which circumstance believed by them, made *Joshua* advance his banners with so much courage against the proudest of his enemies, well knowing man could not shut that door upon them which God had opened. Thus every particular assistance God gives the Christian against any corruption, is intended by God to be an *Achor*, a door of hope, from which he may expect the total overthrow of that cursed seed in his bosom: When he adds the least degree of strength to his grace or comfort, he gives us a door of hope, that he will consummate both in glory: O! what courage must this needs bring to thee (poor heart) in thy fears and faintings. *Paul* had many enemies at *Ephesus* to oppose him, but having *an effectual door opened unto him* for his encouragement, he went on undauntedly, 1 *Cor.* xvi. 9. As an army, after stubborn resistance by the enemy, who labour what they can to keep them out, the gate of the city flies open, then the soldiers press in amain with a shout. Thus, after much wrestling with God for pardon of sin, or strength against sin, the door of the promise flies open, and God comes in with some assisting, comforting presence, now hope takes heart, and makes the soul fall on with double zeal.

CHAP. IV.

Sheweth, How Hope makes the Christian content with, and faithful in the meanest Place and lowest Employment that God orders for him.

SECONDLY, As hope raiseth the Christian's spirit to attempt great exploits, so it makes him faithful in the meanest and lowest services, that the providence of God calls him to: For the same providence lays out every one his work and calling, which sets bounds for their habitations on the

the earth. Some he sets on the high places of the earth, and appoints them honourable employment: Others he pitcheth on lower ground, and orders them in some obscure corner, to employ themselves about work of an inferior nature all their life; and we need not be ashamed to do that work which the great God sets us about. The *Italians* say true, *No man fouls his hands in doing his own business.* Now, to encourage every Christian to be faithful in his particular place, he hath made promises that are applicable to them all. Promises are like the beams of the sun, they shine as freely in at the window of the poor man's cottage, as of the prince's palace. And these *Hope* trades with, and these animate the Christian at his work; indeed we are no more faithful in our callings, than acted by faith and hope therein. Now observe, God lays his promise so as it may strengthen our hands and hearts against the chief discouragement that weakens them in their callings. The great discouragement of those high employments, *Magistracy* and *Ministry*, is the difficulty of the *Province*, and opposition they find from the angry world. These, therefore, are guarded and supported with such promises as may fortify their hearts against the force and fury with which the world comes forth to oppose them: *I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee*; *be strong and be of good courage*, Josh. i. 5. which was given to *Israel*'s chief *Magistrate*. And the *Minister*'s promise suits well with this, as having ordinarily the same difficulties, enemies, and discouragement, *Go teach all nations*; and, *Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*, Matt. xxviii. 20.

Again, the temptation that usually haunts persons in low and ignoble callings, is the meanness of them, which occasions discontent and envy in some, to see themselves on the floor, and their brother preferred to more honourable services; in others, dejection of spirit, as if they were, like the *Eunuch*, but dry trees, unprofitable, and brought no glory to God, while others by their more eminent places and callings, have the advantage of being highly serviceable to God in their generations. Now, to arm the Christian against this temptation, and remove this discouragement, God hath annexed as great a reward in the promise to his faithfulness in the meanest employment, as the most honourable is capable of. What more mean and despicable than the servant's employment? Yet no less than Heaven itself is promised

mised to them, if faithful, *Col.* iii. 22. (he is speaking there to such) *Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men, knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ.* Where observe,

First, What honour he puts on the poor servant's work; *He serves the Lord Christ;* yea, in the lowest piece of work that belongs to his office: His drudgery is divine service, as well as his praying and hearing; for he saith, *Whatever ye do.*

Again, Observe the reward that is laid up for such, and that is as great, as he shall receive, that hath been faithful in ruling kingdoms; *The reward of the inheritance.* As if God had said, be not, O! my child, out of love with thy homely work; 'ere long thou shalt sit as high as he that sways sceptres; though your employment now be not the same with his, yet your acceptation is the same, and so shall your reward also. Thus we see, as we bestow more abundant honour on those members of our body, which we think less honourable, so doth Christ with those members of his body, which, by reason of their low place in the world, may be thought to be most despised, he puts an abundant honour upon them in his promise. And where hope is raised, the Christian cannot but take sweet satisfaction from the expectation thereof: The poor ploughman that is a Saint, and ploughs in hope of reaping salvation, would be as well contented with his place and work, as the courtier is with his. Think of this, when any of you have a servant to chuse, if you would have your work faithfully and heartily done, employ such about it (if they be to be had) as have a hope of salvation: This will not suffer them to wrong you, though they could: Their helmet will defend them from such temptations. *Jacob* was a true drudge for his master, *Laban,* by day and night, though he used him none of the best, in chopping and changing his wages so often; but *Jacob* served in hope, and expected his reward from a better master than *Laban*; and this made him faithful to an unfaithful man. *Joseph* would not wrong his master, though at the request of his mistress; he chose to suffer his unjust anger, rather than accept of her unchaste love. The evidence of this grace in a servant, is better security for his faithfulness, than a bond of a thousand pounds.

CHAP. V.

Sheweth the mighty influence Hope hath upon the Christian to support him in his Afflictions; in particular, what Help it gives, and how.

THIRDLY, This hope of salvation supports the soul in the greatest afflictions. The Christian's patience is, as it were, his back, on which he bears his burthens; and some afflictions are so heavy, that he needs a broad one to carry them well. But if hope lay not the pillow of the promise between his back and his burthen, the least cross will prove insupportable; therefore it is called, *The patience of hope*, 1 Thess. i. 3. There is a patience, I confess, and many know not a better, when men force themselves into a kind of quietness in their troubles, because they cannot help it, and there is no hope. This I may call a desperate patience, and it may do them some service for a while, and but for a while. If despair were a good cure for troubles, the damned would have more ease; for they have despair enough, if that would help them. There is another patience also very common in the world, and that is a blockish, stupid patience, which, like *Nabal*'s mirth, last no longer than they are drunk with ignorance; for they no sooner come to understand the true state they are in, but their hearts die within them: But the patience of hope, we are now treating of, is a sober grace, and abides as long as hope lasts; when hope is lively and active, then it floats, yea, even danceth aloft the waters of affliction, as a sound ship doth in a tempestuous sea; but when hope springs a leak, then the billows break into the Christian's bosom, and he sinks apace, till hope, with much labour at the pump of the promise, clears the soul again. This was *David*'s case, Psalm lxix. 1. *Save me, for the waters come into my soul.* What means he by coming into his soul? Surely, no other than this, that they oppressed his spirit, and as it were sued into his very conscience, raising fears and perplexities there, by reason of his sins, which at present put his faith and hope to some disorder, that he could not

not for a while see to the comfortable end of his affliction but was as one under water, covered with his fears; as appears by what follows, *ver.* 2. *I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing.* He compares himself to one in a quagmire, that can feel no firm ground to bear him up; and observe whence his trouble rose, and where the waters made their entrance, *ver.* 5. *O God, thou knowest my foolishness, and my sins are not hid from thee.* This holy man lay under some fresh guilt, and this made him so uncomfortable under his affliction, because he saw his sin in the face of that, and tasted some displeasure from God for it in his outward trouble, which made it so bitter in the going down; and, therefore, when once he hath humbled himself by confessing his sin, and was able to see the coast clear betwixt Heaven and him, so as to believe the pardon of his sin, and hope for good news from God again, he then returns to his sweet temper, and sings in the same affliction, where before he sunk.

SECT. I.

But more particularly I shall shew what powerful influence hope hath on the Christian in affliction, and how.

First, What influence it hath.

First, It stills and silenceth him under affliction. It keeps the king's peace in the heart, which else would soon be in an uproar. A hopeless soul is clamorous; one while it chargeth God, another while it reviles instruments. It cannot long rest, and no wonder, when hope is not there. Hope hath a rare art in stilling a froward spirit, when nothing else can; as the mother can make the crying child quiet by laying it to the breast, when the rod makes it cry worse. This way *David* took, and found it effectual; when his soul was unquiet, by reason of his present affliction, he lays it to the breast of the promise, *Why art thou disquieted, O my soul, within me? Hope then in God,* Psalm xlii. And here his soul sweetly sleeps as the child with the teat in his mouth: And that this was his usual way, we may think by the frequent instances we find; thrice we find him taking this course in two *Psalms*, xlii. and xliii. When *Aaron* and *Miriam* were so uncivil with *Moses*, and used him so ill in

their foul language, no doubt it was a heavy affliction to the spirit of that holy man, and aggravation of his sorrow, to consider out of whose bow those sharp arrows came; yet it is said, *Moses held his peace*, waiting for God to clear his innocency; and his patience made God, no doubt, the more angry, to see this meek man wronged, who durst trust him with the righting of his name; and, therefore, with such speed he wiped off the dirt they had thrown on him, before it could soak into the prejudice of his good name in the thoughts of others. Indeed, this waiting on God for deliverance in an afflicted state, consists much in a holy silence, *Psalm* lxii. 1. *Truly, my soul waiteth upon God, from him cometh my salvation;* or, as the *Hebrew, My soul is silent.* It is a great mercy, in an affliction, to have our bodily senses, so as not to lie raving, but still and quiet, much more to have the heart silent and patient. And we find the heart is as soon heat into a distemper as the head. Now what the spunge is to the cannon, when hot with often shooting, is hope to the soul in multiplied afflictions; it cools the spirit, and meekens it, that it doth not break out into distempered thoughts or words against God.

Secondly, This hope fills the afflicted soul with such inward joy and consolation, that it can laugh while tears are in the eye, sigh and sing all in a breath; it is called, *The rejoicing of Hope*, Heb. iii. 6. And hope never affords more joy than in affliction; it is on a watery cloud that the sun paints those curious colours in the rainbow, Rom. v. 3. *Rejoice in the hope of glory, and not only so, but we glory in tribulation.* Glorying, is rejoicing in a ravishment, when it is so great, that it cannot contain itself within the Christian's own breast, but comes forth in some outward expression, and lets others know what a feast it sits at. The springs of comfort lie high indeed, when his joy pours out at the mouth: And all this joy, with which the suffering Saint is entertained, is sent in by hope at the cost of Christ, who hath provided such unspeakable glory for them in Heaven, as will not suffer them to bemoan themselves for those tribulations that befal them on the way to it. Hope breaks the alabaster-box of the promise over the Christian's head, and so diffuseth the consolations thereof abroad, which, like a precious ointment, have a virtue to exhilirate and refresh the spirit, so to heal the wounds, and remove the smart, which

which the Christian's poor heart may feel from its affliction, according to the *Apostle, ver. 5. Hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.* There are two graces, which Christ useth above any other, to fill the soul with joy, faith and hope, because these two fetch all their wine of joy without doors: Faith tells the soul what Christ hath done for it, and so comforts it: Hope revives the soul with the news of what Christ will do; both draw at one tap, Christ and his promise; whereas the other graces present the soul with its own inherent excellencies; what it doth and suffers for him, rather than what he for them: So that it were neither honourable for Christ, nor safe for the Saint, do draw his joy from this vessel. Not honourable to Christ! this were the way to have the King's crown set on the subject's head, and cry *Hosannah* to the grace of Christ in us, which is due only to the mercy of God to us; for thither we will carry our praise, whence we have our joy; and therefore upon our allegiance we are *only to rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh*, Phil. iii. 3. And it would be no more safe for us, than honourable for him; because of the instability of our hearts, and unconstant actings of our graces, which are as often ebbing as flowing; and so our joy could not be constant, because our graces are not; but as these springs lie high or low, so would this rise and fall; yea, we were sure to drink more water than wine, oftner want joy than have it; whereas now the Christian's cup need never be empty, because he draws his wine from an undrainable fountain, that never sends any poor soul away ashamed, as the brook of our inherent grace would certainly do.

SECT. II.

Question. But whence hath hope this virtue? Or what are the ingredients in hope's cordial that thus exhilarates the Saint's spirit in affliction?

Answer. First, Hope brings certain news of a happy issue, that shall shortly close up all the wounds made by his present sufferings. When God comes to save his afflicted servants, though he may antedate their hopes, and surprise them before they looked for him, yet he doth not come unlooked

unlooked for; salvation is that they lot upon; *Jer.* xxix. 11. *I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.* That is, an end suitable to the hopes and expectations taken up by you. Hope is a prying grace, it is able to look beyond the exterior transactions of providence: It can, by the help of the promise, peep into the very bosom of God, and read what thoughts and purposes are writ there concerning the Christian's particular estate, and this it imparts to him, bidding him not be at all troubled to hear God speaking roughly to him in the language of his providence; for saith hope, I can assure thee he means thee well, whatever he saith that sounds otherwise: For as the law which came hundreds of years after the promise made to *Abraham,* could not disannul it; so neither can any intervening affiictions make void those thoughts and counsels of love, which so long before have been set upon his heart for thy salvation. Now such an one must needs have a great advantage above others, for the pacifying and satisfying his spirit, concerning the present proceedings of God towards him; because though the actings of God upon the outward stage of providence be now sad and grievous, yet he is acquainted with Heaven's plot therein, and is admitted as it were into the attiring room of his secret counsel, where he sees garments of salvation preparing, in which he shall at last be clad, and come forth with joy. The traveller, when taken in a storm, can stand patiently under a tree while it rains, because he hopes it is but a shower, and sees it clear up in one part of the Heavens, while it is dark in another. Providence, I am sure, is never so dark and cloudy, but hope can see fair weather coming from the promise; *When things begin, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh,* Luke xxi. 28. And that is as black a day as can come. When the Christian's affairs are most disconsolate, he may soon meet with a happy change. The joy of that blessed day, 1 *Cor.* xv. 52. comes, *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, we shall be changed.* In one moment sick and sad, in the next well and glad, never to know more what groans and tears mean. Now clad with the rags of mortal flesh, made miserable with a thousand troubles that attend it; in the twinkling of an eye arrayed with the robes of immortality, enriched

riched with a thousand times more glory than the sun itself wears in that garment of light, which now dazzleth our eyes. *It is but winking* (said a holy martyr to his fellow-sufferer in the fire with him) *and our pain and sorrow is all over.* Who can wonder to see a Saint cheerful in his afflictions, that knows what good news he looked to hear from Heaven, and how soon he knows not? You have heard of the *Weapon Salve,* that cures wounds at a distance; such a salve is hope. The Saint's hope is laid up in Heaven, and yet it heals all their wounds they receive on earth. But this is not all; for as hope prophesies well concerning the happy end of the Christian's afflictions, so it assures him he shall be well attended, while he lies under them. If Christ sends his disciples to sea, he means to be with them when they most need his company. The well child may be left a while by the mother, but the sick one she will by no means stir from; *When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee.* Isaiah xliii. 2. You know what God said to *Moses,* when he was sick of his employment, and made so many excuses from his own inability, and all that he might have leave to lay down his commission, *Go,* saith God; *Ex.* iv. 12. *and I will be thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.* And again, *ver.* 14. *Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well, and also behold he cometh forth to meet thee.* Thus God animated him, to like that hard providence he was called to. Methinks, I hear hope, as God's messenger, speaking after the same sort to the drooping soul, oppressed with the thoughts of some great affliction, and ready to conclude he shall never be able to stem so rough a tide, bear up, and cheerfully lift up his head above such surging waves. Go, O my soul, (saith hope) for thy God will be with thee, and thou shalt suffer at his charge. Is not Christ thy brother? yea, is he not thy husband? He, thou thinkest, can tell how to suffer, who was brought up to the trade, from the cradle to the cross; behold, even he comes forth to meet thee, glad to see thy face, and willing to impart some of his suffering skill unto thee. That man indeed must needs carry a heavy heart to prison, who knows neither how he can be maintained there, nor delivered thence: but hope easeth the heart of both these.

Secondly,

Secondly, Hope assures the Christian not only of the certainty of salvation coming, but also of the transcendency of this salvation to be such, as the sorrow of his present sufferings bears no proportion to the joy of that. This kept the primitive Christians from swooning, while their enemies let out their blood. They had the scent of this hope to exhilarate their spirits; 2 *Cor.* iv. 16. *For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.* Is not this strange, that their spirit and courage should increase with the losing of their blood? *ver.* 17. *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* Behold here the difference betwixt hopes of heaven, and hopes of the world. These latter are fanciful and slighty, seem great in hope, but prove nothing in hand; like *Eve's* apple, fair to look on, but sour in the juice, and bad of nourishment in the eating. They are, as one calls them, *Nothing between two dishes.* It were well if men could in their worldly hopes come but to the unjust Steward's reckoning, and for an hundred felicities they promise themselves from the enjoyments they pursue, find but fifty at last paid them: alas, they must not look to come to so good a market, that have to do with the creature, which will certainly put them to greater disappointments than so. They may bless themselves, if they please, for a while in their hopes, as the husbandman sometimes doth in the goodly shew that he hath of corn standing upon his ground; but by that time they have reaped their crop, and thrashed out their hopes, they will find little besides straw and chaff, emptiness and vanity left them: a poor return, God knows, to pay them for the expence of their time and strength which they have laid out upon them, much less suitable to recompense the loss he is put to in his conscience; for there are few who are greedy hunters after the world's enjoyments, that do drive their worldly trade without running in debt to their consciences. And I am sure he buys gold too dear, that pays the peace of his conscience for the purchase. But heaven is had cheap, though it be with the loss of all our carnal interests, even life itself. Who will grudge to part with a sorry lease of a low-rented farm, in which he also hath but a few days left before it expires, (and such our temporal life is)

is) for the perpetuity of such an inheritance as is to be had with the Saints in light? This hath ever made the faithful servants of God carry their lives in their hands, willing to lay them down; *While they look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

Thirdly, As hope assures the soul of the certainty and transcendency of heaven's salvation, so also of the necessary subserviency that his afflictions have towards his obtaining this salvation; *Luke* xxiv. 26. *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?* As if Christ had said, What reason have you so to mourn, and take on for your master's death, as if all your hopes were now spilt? Ought he not to suffer? Was there any other way that he could get home, and take possession of his glory that waited for him in heaven? And if you do not grudge him his preferment, never be so inordinately troubled to see him onwards to it, though through the miry lane of suffering. And truly the Saint's way to salvation, lies in the same road, *Rom.* viii. 17. *If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together;* only with this advantage, that his going before hath beaten it plain, so that now it may be forded, which but for him had been utterly unpassable to us. Afflictions understood with this notion, That they are as necessary for our waftage to glory, as water is to carry the ship to her port (which may as soon sail without water, as a Saint land in heaven, without the subserviency of afflictions); this well understood, would reconcile the greatest afflictions to our thoughts, and make us delight to walk in their company. This knowledge *Parisiensis* calls *Unus de septum radiis doni scientiæ,* one of the seven beams of divine knowledge, for the want of which we call good evil, and evil good; think God blesseth us, when we are in the sun-shine of prosperity, and curseth when our condition is over-cast with a few clouds of adversity; but hope hath an eye that can see heaven in a cloudy day, and an anchor that can find firm land under a weight of waters to hold by; it can expect good out of evil. The *Jews* open their windows when it thunders and lightens, expecting, they say, their Messiah to come at such a time to them. I am sure, hope opens her window widest in a day of storm and tempest;

Zeph. iii. 12. *I will leave in the midst of thee afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in thee.* And *Micah* vii. 7. *Therefore will I look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.* See what strong hold hope's anchor takes, and it is remarkable, if you observe the place; because all things were at so desperate a pass in the church's affairs, *therefore*, saith the Saint, *I will look, I will wait.* Indeed God doth not take the axe into his hand to make chips; his people, when he is hewing them, and the axe goes deepest, they may expect some beautiful piece at the end of the work. It is a sweet meditation *Parisiensis* hath upon *Rom.* viii. 28. *We know that all things work together for good to them that love God. Ubi magis intrepida, magis pensata esse debes, quam inter cooperarios meos, & coadjutores meos?* Where, O my soul, shouldst thou be more satisfied, free of care and fear, than when thou art among thy fellow-labourers, and those that come to help thee to attain thy so much desired salvation, which thy afflictions do! They work together with ordinances and other providential dealings of God for good, yea, thy chief good; and thou couldst as ill spare their help as any other means which God appoints thee. Should one find, on rising in the morning, some on his house-top tearing off the tiles, and with axes and hammers taking down the roof, he might at first be amazed, and troubled at the sight, yea, think they are enemies come to do him mischief; but when he understands they are workmen sent by his father to mend his house, and make it better, which cannot be done without taking some of it down, he is satisfied to endure the present trouble, yea, thankful to his father, for the care and cost he bestows on him: The hope of what advantage will come of their work, makes him very willing to dwell a while amidst the ruins and rubbish of his old house. I do not wonder to see hopeless souls so impatient in their sufferings, sometimes even to distraction; alas, they fear presently, and have reason so to do, that they come to pull all their worldly joys and comforts down about their ears, which gone, what alas have they left to comfort them, who can look for nothing but hell in another world? But the believer's heart is eased of all this, because assured from the promise, that they are sent on a better errand to him from his Heavenly Father, who intends him no hurt, but good, even to build the ruinous frame

frame of his soul into a glorious temple at last, and these afflictions come, among other means, to have a hand in the work, and this satisfies him, that he can say, Lord, cut and hew me how thou wilt, that at last I may be polished and framed according to the plan, which love hath drawn in thy heart for me. Though some ignorant man would think his clothes spoiled when besmeared with fuller's earth or sope, yet one that knows the cleansing nature of them, will not be afraid to have them so used.

CHAP. VI.

Wherein is shewed, that God stays long before he performs some Promises, and that it is Hope's Office then to keep the Christian in a waiting Posture.

THE fourth and last office of hope propounded, is to quiet and compose the heart, when the good things of the promise (so much longed for by the Christian) stay long before they are performed. Patience, I told you is the back on which the Christian's burdens are carried, and hope the pillow between the back and the burden, to make it sit easy. Now patience hath two shoulders; one to bear the present evil, and another to forbear the future good promised. And as hope makes the burden of the present evil of the cross light, so it makes the longest stay of the future good promised, short; whereas without this, the creature could have neither strength to bear the one, nor patience to wait for the other; *Lam.* iii. 18. *And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord*, implying thus much, That where there is no hope, there is no strength; the soul's comfort soon gives up the ghost, where all hope fails. God undertook for Israel's protection and provision in the wilderness; but when their dough was spent, and their store ended, which they brought out of *Egypt*, they fall foul with God and

Moses, and why? but because their hope was spent as soon as their dough. *Moses* ascends the mount, and is but a few days out of their sight, and in all haste they must have a golden calf; and why? because they never hoped to see him more. This is the reason why God hath so few servants that will stick to him, because God puts them to wait for what he means to give, and most are short-spirited, and cannot stay. You know what *Naomi* said to her daughters, Ruth i. 12, 13. *If I should have a husband, and should also bear sons, would you tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands?* The promise hath salvation in its womb; but will a soul without heavenly hope, stay till the promise ripens, and this happiness be grown up? No; sure, they will rather make some match with the beggarly creature, or any base lust which will pay them in some pleasure at present, than wait so long, though it be for Heaven itself. Thus, as *Tamar* played the strumpet, because the husband promised her, was not given her so soon as she desired, *Gen.* xxxviii. so it is the undoing of many souls, because the comfort, joy, and bliss of the promise is with-held at present, and his people are made to wait for their reward; therefore they throw themselves into the embraces of this adulterous world: *Demas hath forsaken me, and loved this present world*, 2 Tim. iv. 10. The soul only that hath this divine hope, will be found patiently to stay for the good of the promise.

SECT. I.

First, God often stays long before he fulfils his promise to his people. The promise contains the matter of all our hopes, called, therefore, *The hope of the promise.* To hope without a promise, is to claim a debt that never was owing. Now the good things of the promise are not paid down presently; indeed, then there would not be such need of promises. What need of a bond, where the money is paid down? God promised *Abraham* a son, but he stayed many years for him after the bond of the promise was given. He promised *Canaan* to him and his seed, yet hundreds of years interposed between the promise and performance, *Esau* was spread into a kingdom before the heirs of the promise had

their

their inheritance. Yea, all the Patriarchs who were the third generation after *Abraham, died, and received not the promise,* Heb. xi. 13. *Simeon* had a promise that he should *not see death till he had seen the Lord's Christ,* Luke ii. 26. but this was not performed till he had one foot in the grave. In a word, those promises which are the portion of all the Saints, and may be claimed by one as well as another: their date is set in the book of God's decree, when to be paid; some sooner, some later; but not expressed in the promise. He hath engaged to answer the prayers of his people, and fulfil the desires of those that fear him, *Psalm* cxlv. 19. But it proves a long voyage sometimes before the praying Saint hath the return of his adventure. There comes oft a long and sharp winter between the sowing time of prayer, and the reaping. He hears us, indeed, as soon as we pray, but we oft do not hear of him so soon. Prayers are not long on their journey to Heaven, but long a coming thence in a full answer. Christ, at this day in Heaven, hath not a full answer to some of those prayers, which he put up on earth; therefore, he is said, *to expect till his enemies be made his foot-stool,* Heb. x. 13. Promises we have for the subduing sin and Satan under our feet, yet we find these enemies still skulking within us, and many a sad scuffle we have with them before they are routed out of our hearts. And so of others; we may find sometimes the Christian, as great an heir as he is to joy and comfort, hardly able to shew a penny of this heavenly treasure in his purse. And for want of well pondering this one clause, poor souls are oft led into temptation, even to question their Saint-ship. Such promises are the Saint's portion, saith one, but I cannot find them performed to me, therefore I am none of them; many a prayer I have sent to Heaven, but I hear no news of them. The Saints are conquerors over their lusts, but I am often foiled and worsted by mine: There is a Heaven of comfort in the promise, but I am as it were in the belly of Hell, swallowed up with fears and terrors: Such are the reasonings of poor souls in the distress of their spirits; whereas all this trouble they put themselves to might be prevented, if they had faith to believe this one principle of undoubted truth; that God performs not his promises all at once, and what they want in hand, they may see on the way coming to them.

SECT.

SECT. II.

Secondly, When God stays long before he makes payment of the promise, then it is the believer's duty to wait for it: *Though it tarry, wait for it,* Habak. ii. He is speaking there of the good of the promise, which God intended to perform in the appointed time; because it might tarry longer than their hasty hearts would, he bids them wait for it. As one that promiseth to come to a friend's house, sends him word to sit up for him, though he tarry later than ordinary, he will come at last. What! wait, when we have stayed so long, and no sight of God's coming, after this prayer, and that sermon, so many long looks given at the window of his ordinances and providences, and no tidings to be heard of his approach in mercy and comfort to my soul, and after this, still am I bid wait? This is hard work. True, to flesh and blood it is; yea, weak faith is oft out of breath, and prone to sit down, or turn back, when it hath gone to meet God in the returns of his mercy, and misseth of him; and, therefore, the Apostle ushers in this duty with an affectionate prayer, 2 Thess. iii. 5. *The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.* He had laid down a strong ground of consolation for them in the preceding chapter; in that *they were chosen to salvation, and called by the gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ,* verse 13, 14. and assured them, that *God who is faithful, would establish them, and keep them from evil,* verse 3. of this chapter: he means they should not miscarry, and at last fall short of the glory promised; but being sensible how difficult a work it was for them amidst their own present weaknesses, the apostacies of others, and the assaults of Satan upon themselves, to hold fast the assurance of their hope unto the end, he turns himself from them to speak to God for them, *The Lord direct your hearts:* And, as if he had said, it is a way you will never find, a work you will never be able of yourselves thus to wait patiently till Christ come, and bring the full reward of the promise with him. The Lord therefore direct your hearts into it. And *Moses,* before he ascended the mount, had a fear and jealousy of what afterward proved too true; that the Israelites unbelieving

lieving hearts would not have the patience to wait for his return, when he should stay some while with God out of their sight; to prevent which, he gave express command before he went up, that *they should tarry there for him*, Exodus xxiv 14. Indeed, a duty more contrary, than this of waiting quietly and silently on God, to our proud hearts, I know not. We can make the great God bear our manners, and lackey after us, before we do what he commands, but if the promise comes not galloping full speed to us, we think it will never be at us.

But why doth God, when he hath made a promise, make his people stay so long?

I shall answer this question by asking another: Why doth God make any promise at all to his creature? This may be well asked, considering how free God was from owing any such kindness to his creature, till, by the mere good pleasure of his will, he put himself into bonds, and made himself, by his promise, a debtor to his elect; and this proves the former question to be saucy and over-bold. As if some rich man should make a poor beggar, that is a stranger to him, his heir, and when he tells him this, he should ask, but why must I stay so long for it? truly, any time is too soon for him to receive a mercy from God, that thinks God's time in sending it too late. This hasty spirit is as grievous to God as his stay can be to us. And no wonder God takes it so heinously, if we consider the bitter root that bears it.

First, It proceeds from a selfishness of spirit, whereby we prefer our own content and satisfaction before the glory of God; and this becomes not a gracious soul. Our comfort flows in by the performance of the promise, but the revenue of God's honour is paid in to him, by our humble waiting on him in the interval between the promise and the performance, and is the main end why he forbears the paying it hastily. *Jacob* served seven years for *Rachel;* and God sure may better make us wait, before the promise is given to our embraces by its full accomplishment; Heb. x. 36. *Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.* It is very fit the master should dine before the man; and if we like not a servant, that think much to stay so long from his meal, as is required, how much more must God dislike the rudeness of our impatient spirits, that have

have our turn served in the comfort of the promise, before he hath the honour of our waiting on him.

Secondly, It proceeds from deep ingratitude, and this is a sin odious to God and man, Psalm cvi. 13. *They soon forgot his works, and waited not for his counsel.* God was not behind-hand with this people. It was not so long since he had given them an experiment of his power and truth, he had but newly lent them his hand, and led them dry-shod through a sea, with which they seemed to be much confirmed in their faith, and enlarged in their acknowledgements, *verse* 12. *Then believed they his words, they sang his praises.* One would have thought God's credit now would have gone for a great sum with them ever after; but it proved nothing so, they dare not trust God with so much as their bill of fare, what they shall eat and drink; and, therefore, it is said, *They waited not for his counsel, but lusted exceedingly in the Wilderness.* That is, they prevented the wisdom and providence of God, which would have provided well for them, if they could but have stayed. And why all this haste? *They forgot his works.* They had lost the thankful sense of what was past, and therefore cannot wait for what was to come.

SECT. III.

Thirdly, Hope will enable the soul to wait when the promise stays longest; it is the very nature of hope so to do, Lamentations iii. 26. *It is good for a man to hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.* Hope groans, when the mercy promised comes not, but does not grumble. Hope's groans are from the spirit, sighed out to God in prayer, *Rom.* viii. 26. and these lighten the soul of its burthen of fear and solicitous care; whereas the groans of a hopeless soul are vented in discontented passions against God, and these are like a loud wind to a fire, that makes its rage more, Jer. xxv. 10. *They shall drink and be moved, and be mad because of the sword that I shall send among them.* It is spoken of the enemies of God and his people. God had prepared them a draught, which should have strange effects, *They should be moved.* As a man, whose brains are disturbed with strong drink, is restless, yea, be mad; as some, when

when they are drunk, quarrel with every one they meet: So should their hearts be filled with rage even against God himself, who runs his sword into their sides, because they had no hope to look for any healing of their wounds at his hand. But now where there is hope, the heart is soon pacified. Hope is the handkerchief that God puts into his people's hands, to wipe the tears from their eyes, which their present troubles, and long stay of expected mercies, draw from them, Jer. xxxi. 16, 17. *Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears, for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy, and there is hope in the end.* This, with some other comfortable promises which God gave to this Prophet in a vision, filled his heart with joy, that he was as much recruited and comforted, as a sick or weary man is after a night of sweet sleep; *verse 26. Upon this I awaked, and my sleep was sweet unto me.*

CHAP. VII.

Sheweth, A threefold Assurance which Hope gives the Christian, and thereby quiets him in waiting for the performance of Promises, when God stays long.

HOPE pacifies the Christian with a threefold assurance, when the promise seems to stay long.

First, Hope assures the soul, that though God stays a while before he performs the promise, yet he doth not delay.

Secondly, That when he comes, he will abundantly recompense his long stay.

Thirdly, That while he stays to perform one promise, he will leave the comfort of another, to bear the Christian company in the absence of that.

SECT. I.

First, Hope assures the soul, that God will not delay, though he may stay, Hab. ii. 3. *The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry.* How is this? Though it tarry, it will not tarry! How shall we reconcile this? Very well. Though the promise tarries till the appointed time, yet it will not tarry beyond it. *When the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt*, Acts vii. 17. As the herbs and flowers which sleep all winter in their roots under ground, when the time of spring approacheth, presently they start forth of their beds, where they had lain so long unperceived. Thus will the promise in its season: He delays, who passeth the time appointed: But he only stays that waits for the appointed time, and then comes. Every promise is dated, but with a mysterious character; and for want of skill in God's chronology, we are prone to think God forgets us, when, indeed, we forget ourselves in being so bold to set God a time of our own, and in being angry that he comes not just then to us. As if a man should set his watch by his own hungry stomach, rather than by the sun, and then say it is noon, and chide because his dinner is not ready. We are over-greedy of comfort, and expect the promise should keep time with our hasty desires, which, because it doth not, we are discontented: A high piece of folly! the sun will not the go faster, for setting our watch forward; nor the promise come the sooner, for our attending it. It is true, what one saith, though God seldom comes at our day, because we seldom reckon right, yet he never fails his own day. The Apostle, 2 *Thess.* ii. 2, 3. exhorts the church there, That they *would not be shaken in mind, or be troubled, as that day of Christ were at hand.* But what need of this exhortation to Saints, that look for their greatest joy to come with the approach of that day? Can their hearts be troubled, to hear the day of their redemption draws nigh, the day of refreshing is at hand? It was not, therefore, I conceive, the coming of that day, which

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was so unpleasing and so affrighting, but the time in which some seducers would have persuaded them to expect it, as if it had been at the very doors, and would presently have surprised them in their generation; which had been very sad indeed, because then it should have come before many prophecies and promises had received their accomplishment, and by that means the truth of God would have gone off the stage with a slur; which must not be as he tells them, *ver.* 3. *For that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the Son of Perdition.* And as that promise stays but till those intermediate truths, which have a shorter period, be fulfilled: So all the rest, but wait what God hath appointed to intervene, and they punctually shall have their delivery in their set time. Thou art, may be, bleeding under a wounded spirit, a poor broken-hearted creature, that liest steeping in thy tears for sin. The promise tells thee, that God is nigh to revive thee, Isaiah lvii. 15. yet thou comest from this prayer, and that sermon, but hast no sight of him, nor canst hear no more news of his coming than what the promise gives thee. Look now that God suffers no prejudice by his stay in thy thoughts, but conclude that his time is not come, or else he had been ere this with thee; and take heed of measuring God's miles by thy own scale, for his nigh may be thy far. God could have told his people the time when he meant to come with the performance of every promise, as easily as set it down in his own purpose, but he hath concealed it in most, as an happy advantage to our faith, whereby we may more fully express our confidence in waiting for that which we know not when we shall receive. *Abraham's* faith was great and strong to follow God when he concealed the place he meant to lead him to, for *he went he knew not whither*, Heb. xi. 8. So it requires great faith to rest satisfied with the promise when the time of payment is hid. But if we consider who we trade with, we can have no reason to be the least jealous, no not when he stays longest, that he will fail or delay us a moment longer than the set time. There are three causes why men break their times of payment.

First, Forgetfulness; many remember not what they promise. The day comes, and it is quite out of their minds. Men seldom forget when they are to receive, but too oft when they are to pay. An extraordinary occasion must be

sent to rub up the butler's memory, or else he will never think of his prison-promise. But God's promise is never out of his thoughts, *He remembers his Covenant*, Psalm cv. 8. his people and their affairs are *engraven on the palms of his hand, and their walls are always before him*, Isaiah xlix. 16. Though the preferment of *Pharoah*'s court made the butler forget his promise to *Joseph*, yet all the glory that Christ sees and enjoys in Heaven, hath not the power to blot the remembrance of his promise to his people, who lie in chains of afflictions here below. And God would have his Saints take notice of this to comfort themselves with, while he comes. *I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end*, Jer. xxix. 41.

Secondly, Unfaithfulness: A promise with some is no more than a collar on an ape's neck, you have them not a whit the faster by it, for they can slip off the obligation at their pleasure. May be they never intended performance, when they passed it, but made use of a promise only as a key to lock up their inteniton of deceiving from your present knowledge. Others haply mean at present as they say, but soon grow sick of their engagement, upon sight of some disadvantage which their after-thoughts discover likely to befall them upon the performance, and therefore their wits are set at work to coin some handsome evasion to delude the engagement, or at least delay the payment; which made *Lysander* say of some men, that they played with oaths and promises, *sicut pueri cum astragalis*, as children do at ninepins: They will keep them if they can get by the performance; but if it be like to prove a losing game, they will rather run in debt to their consciences by breaking them, than to their purse, by their performance. But no fear of God; his name is truth and faithfulness. Now can truth itself lie, or faithfulness deceive? *In my Father's house* (saith Christ) *are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go, I will come again and receive you*, John xiv. 2. 3. See here the candour and nakedness of our Saviour's heart: As if he had said, this is no shift to be gone, that so I may by a fair tale, leave you in hopes of that which shall never come to pass. No, did I know it otherwise than I speak, my heart is so full of love to you, that it would not have suffered

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me to put such a cheat upon you for a thousands worlds ; you may trust me to go ; for as surely as you see me go, shall your eyes see me come again to your everlasting joy ; the promises are none of them yea and nay, but yea and Amen in him.

He is wisdom as well as truth. As he is truth, he cannot wrong or deceive us in breaking his word ; and being wisdom, it is impossible he should promise that which should prejudice himself ; and therefore he makes no blots in in his purposes or promises, but what he doth in either is immutable. Repentance is indeed an act of wisdom in the creature ; but it presupposeth, folly, which is incompatible to God. In a word, men too often are rash in promising, and therefore what they in haste promise, they perform at leisure ; they consider not before they vow, and therefore enquire afterward, whether they had best stand to it : But the all-wise God needs not this, as in the creation he looked back upon the several peices of that goodly frame, and saw them so exact, that he took not up his pencil the second time to mend any thing of the first draught ; so in his promises, they are made with such infinite wisdom, that what he hath writ, he will stand to for ever, *Hosea* ii. 19. *I will betroth thee unto me for ever ; yta, I will betroth thee to me in righteousness and in judgement.* Therefore for ever, because in righteousness and in judgement.

Thirdly, From impotency ; men's promises, alas ! depend upon many contingencies. The man haply is rich when he seals the bond, and poor before the day of payment : a wreck at sea, a fire by land, or some other sad accident intervenes, that either quite impoverisheth him, or necessitates him to beg further time, with him in the gospel, *Matt.* xviii. *Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all :* but the great God cannot be put into such streights ; *The strength of Israel will not lie,* 1 Sam. xv. 29. As there is a lie of wickedness, when one promiseth what he will not perform ; so there is a lie that proceeds from weakness, when a person cannot perform what they promise. Thus indeed all men, will be found liars to those that lean on them ; called therefore lying vanities. Vanities, as empty and insufficient ; lying vanities, because they promise what they have not to give ; but God is propounded as a sure bottom for our faith to rest on, *Trust in the Lord, for in Jehovah is strength, strength, or everlasting*

everlasting strength, Isaiah xxvi. Such strength his is as needs not another's strength to uphold it. One man's ability to perform his promises, leans on other's ability to pay their's to him; if they fail him, he is forced to fail them. Thus we see, the breaking of one merchant proves the breaking of many others, whose estates were in his hands. But God's power is independent. Let the whole creation break, yet God is the same, as able to help as ever; *Though the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the Vines:* And, *Yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my Salvation, the Lord God is my strength*, Hab. iii. 17, 18. O how happy are the Saints! a people that never can be undone, no not when the whole world turns bankrupt, because they have his promise, whose power fails not. The Christian cannot come to God when he hath not by him what he wants; *How great is thy loving kindness which thou hast laid up for those that fear thee*, Psalm xxxi. It is laid up, as a father hath his child's portion, in bags, ready to be paid him when the time comes. The Saint shall not stay a moment beyond the date of the promise. *There is forgivencss with thee*, saith the Psalmist, it stands ready for thee against thou comest.

SECT. II.

Secondly, Hope assures the Christian, that though God stays long, yet he will make an abundant recompense when he comes. As the wicked get nothing by God's forbearing to execute his threatening, but the treasuring up more wrath against the day of wrath: so the Saints lose nothing by not having the promise presently paid, but rather treasure up more joy against the joyful day, when the promise shall be performed, Rom ii. 7. *To them who by patient continuance seek for glory and honour, eternal life.* Mark, it is not enough to do well, but to continue therein; nor that neither, except it be patient continuing in well-doing, in the midst of God's seeming delays; and whoever do this, shall be rewarded for all his patience. Ploughing is hungry work, yet because in hopes of reaping an abundant increase, the husbandman faints not. O my soul (saith hope) thou that wantest thy dinner, hold but out a while, and thou shalt have dinner and supper served

served in together when night comes: the sick fits which the Christian hath in the absence of the promise, are all forgot, and the trouble of them over, when once it comes, and he is feasted with the joy it brings, Prov. xiii. 12. *Hope deferred, makes the soul sick; but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life:* That is, when it cometh in God's time after long waiting, then it causeth an overflowing joy. As there is a time, which God hath set for the ripening the fruits of the earth: so there is a time set by God for the good things of the promise, which we are to wait for, and not unseasonably, pluck them, like green apples, off the tree, as too many do, who having no faith or hope to quiet their spirits while God's time comes, therefore snatch that by unwarrantable means, which would in time drop ripe into their bosoms. And what get they by their haste? Alas! they find their enjoyments like corn reaped before it is fit for the sickle, wherewith he that bindeth the sheaves, filleth not his bosom. Therefore we find this duty of waiting pressed under this metaphor, Jam. v. 7. *Be patient brethren, unto the coming of the Lord.* Stay God's time, till he comes according to his promise, and takes you off your suffering work, and be not hasty to shift yourselves out of trouble: and why so? Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receives the early and latter rain, be ye also patient, establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. The husbandman (who the proverb saith, is, *Dives in novum annum*, rich in hope of the next year's crop) though he gladly would have his corn in the barn, yet waits for its ripening in the ordinary course of God's providence; when the former rain comes he is joyful, but yet desires the latter rain also, and stays for it, though long in coming. And do we not see, that a shower sometimes falls close to the time of harvest, that plumps the ear to the great increase of the crop, which some lose, that through distrust of providence put in their sickle too soon? I am sure mercies come fullest, when most waited for. Christ did not so soon supply them with wine at the marriage of *Cana*, as his mother desired, but they had the more for staying a while. There is a double fulness, which the Christian may hope to find in those enjoyments that he hath with long patience waited for.—First, A fulness of duration.

Enjoyments

Enjoyments snatched out of God's hand, are guests come not to stay long; like *David's* child born in adultery, they commonly die in the cradle: they are like some fruit gathered green, which soon rots. Is it riches that is thus got? Some are said to *make haste to be rich*, Prov. xxviii. 20. They cannot by a conscionable diligence in their particular calling, and exercise of godliness, wait upon God; no, the promise doth not gallop fast enough for them; on therefore they spur, and by base practices make haste to be rich. But God makes as much haste to melt their estate, as they to gather. No care and providence of man will keep that estate from God's curse, which is got by so sinful a pursuit; Prov. xiii. 11. *Wealth gotten by vanity* (that is, vain unwarrantable courses) *it shall be diminished.* Like the unsound fat, which great drinkers, and greedy eaters gain to themselves, it hath that in it that will hasten its ruin, Prov. xxi. 6. *The getting of treasures by a lying tongue, is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death.* The meaning is, such estates are tossed like a ball, from one to another, and are not like to stay long in any hand, till it comes into the godly man's, whom God oft, by his providence, makes heir to such men's riches, as you may see, Job xxii. 17. Eccl. ii. 26.

Again, It is comfort and inward joy? Some make too much haste for this; they are not like other Christians, who use to have a wet seed-time, and are content to wait for joy till harvest, or at least, till it be in some forwardness; and the seed of grace, which was sown in tears of humiliation, appears above ground in such solid evidences, as in some degree satisfy them concerning the reality and truth of the same. Then indeed the sincere Christian's spirit begins to cheer up, and his comfort holds, yea, increaseth more and more: Prov. xiii. 9. *The light of the righteous rejoiceth;* that is, over all his fears and doubts, But there are others so hasty, that they are catching at comfort, before ever they were led into acquaintance with godly sorrow. They are delivered without pain, and their faith flames forth in to the joy of assurance, before any smoak of doubtings and fears were seen to rise in their hearts; but alas, it is as soon lost as got, like too forward a nipping spring, that makes the husbandman weep at harvest; or a fair sun-shine day in winter, that is the breeder of many foul ones after it. The

stony

stony ground is an instance for this, *Mark* iv. whose joy was as quickly down as up. A storm of persecution or temptation comes, and immediately he is offended. In a word, take but one instance more, and that is in point of deliverance. Such hasty spirits that cannot wait for the promise to open their prison door, and God to give them a release in his time, but break prison, and by some unwarrantable practice wind themselves out of trouble, we see how miserably they befool themselves: For while they think, by the midwifery of their sinful policy, to hasten their deliverance, they kill it in the birth, which had it come in God's time, might have staid many a fair day with them. The *Jews* are a sad instance for this, who though God gave them such full security for their deliverance from the *Babylonian* hand, would yet take their own course, hoping, it seems, to compass it sooner by policy, than they could expect it to be effected by providence, and therefore to *Egypt* they will post in all haste, not doubting but they shall thence bring their deliverance; but alas, it proved far otherwise; for all they got, was to have more links added to their chain of bondage, and their lordly masters to use greater rigour upon them; which God by his prophets bids them thank their own hasty unbelieving spirits for, Isaiah xxx. 15. *Thus saith the Lord God, the Holy one of Israel, In returning and rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be your strength, and ye would not.* Indeed if we look on such as have quietly waited by hope for God's coming to their help, we shall find they ever speed well. *Joshua*, who bore up against all discouragements from God and man, stedfastly believing and patiently waiting for the land God had promised, did he not live to walk over their graves in the wilderness, that would have turned back to *Egypt?* and to be witness to their destruction also, who presumptuously went up the hill to fight the enemy, and take the land (as they vainly hoped) before God's time was come? Deut. i. Yea, did not he at last divide the land, and lay his bones in a bed of honour, after he had lived to see the promise of God happily performed to his people? So *David*, whose hope and patience was admirable in waiting for the kingdom, after he had the promise of it; especially if we consider what fair opportunities he had to take cruel *Saul* out of the way, whose life alone stood betwixt him and the throne; neither did he want matter to

fill up a declaration for the satisfaction, and pacifying the minds, of the people, if he had a mind to have gone this way to the crown; but he knew those plausible arguments for such a fact, which would have pleased the multitude, would not have pacified his own conscience, and this stayed his hand from any such ripping open the womb of the promise, to come by the crown, with which it was big, but left it to go its full time, and he lost nothing by it.

Secondly, There flows in a fulness of benediction with an enjoyment reaped in God's full time, which is lost for want of patience to wait. Now this benediction is paid in to the waiting soul's bosom two ways.

First, He hath it sweetened to him with the love and favour of God for his comfort, which he cannot so well expect that carves for himself; and cannot stay for God in his own time to lay it on his trencher. There is guilt ever to be found in the company of impatience and distrust; and where guilt is contracted in the getting of an enjoyment, there can be little sweetness tasted when it comes to be used. O! guilt is an imbittering thing, it keeps the soul in a continual fear of hearing ill news from Heaven; and a soul in fear, is not in case to relish the sweetness of a mercy. Such an one may haply have a little tumultuous joy, and warm himself a while at this rash fire of his own kindling, till he comes to have some serious discourse with his own heart, about the way and manner of getting the enjoyment, and this is sure to send such a damp to the heart of the poor creature, as will not suffer that fire long to burn clear. O! what a stab is it to the heart of an oppressor, to say of his great wealth, as that king of his crown, *Here is a fair estate, but God knows how I came by it!* What a wound to the joy of a hypocrite! I have pretended to a great deal of comfort, but God knows how I came by it! Whereas the Christian, who receives any comfort, inward or outward, from God's hand, as a return of his patient waiting, hath none of these sad thoughts to scare him and break his draught when the cup is at his mouth. He knows where he had his outward estate, and inward comfort; he can bring God to vouch both, that they are with his leave and liking. There is a great odds between the joy of the husbandman, at the happy inning of his corn in harvest, and the thief's joy, who hath stolen some sheaves out of another's field, and

and is making merry with his booty. Possibly, you may hear a greater noise, and shouts of joy in the thief's house, than the honest husbandman's; yet no compare between them. An officer's knock at the thief's door, to search his house for stolen goods, spoils his mirth. O! what fear and shame must then take hold on his guilty heart, that hears God coming to search for his stolen mercies and comforts.

Secondly, The waiting soul hath enjoyments sanctified to him for his good, and this another wants with all he hath. And what is the blessing of mercy, but to have it to do us good? Hasty spirits grow worse by enjoyments gathered out of season. This is a sore evil indeed, to have wealth and comfort for our hurt. It was the sin of *Israel, they waited not for his counsel,* Psalm cvi. 13. God had taken them as his charge, and undertook to provide for them if they would have stood to his allowance; but they could not stay his leisure, but *lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desart,* ver. 14. They must have what pleaseth their palate, and when their own impatient hearts call, and so they had, *He gave them their request,* ver. 15. but they had better have been without their feast, for they did not thrive by it, *He sent leanness into their souls,* ver. 15. a secret curse came with their enjoyments, which soon appeared in those great sins they were left to commit, ver. 16. *They envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron the Saint of the Lord;* as also the heavy judgements by which God did testify against them for the same, *Num.* xi. 31. whereas mercies that are received in God's way and time, prove meat of better nourishment to the waiting soul; they do not break out into such blotches and plague-sores as these; as the other are fuel for lust, so these are food to the Saint's graces, and make them more humble and holy: See this in *Israel* xxx. 18. 19. compared with ver. 22. where they, as a fruit of their patient waiting on God for their outward deliverance have with it that which is more worth than the deliverance itself, *i. e.* grace to improve and use it holily. It was a great mercy that *Hannah* had, after her many prayers and long waiting, a son; but a greater, that she had a heart to give up her son again to God, that gave him to her. To have estate, health, or any other enjoyment upon waiting on God for the same, is mercy, but not to be compared with that blessing which sanctifies the heart to use them for God's glory. And this is the ordinary portion of the wait-

ing soul, and that not only in outward comforts, but inward also: The joy and inward peace which the sincere soul hath thus, makes it more humble, holy, heavenly; whereas the comfort which the hypocrite comes so quickly by, either degenerates into pride and self-conceit, or empties itself into some other filthy sink, sometimes even of open profaneness itself, before it hath run far.

SECT. III.

Thirdly, Hope assures the soul, that while God stays the performance of one promise, he shall have the absence thereof supplied with the presence of another. And this is enough to quiet the heart of any that understands himself. God hath laid things in such a sweet method, that there is not one point of time, wherein the soul of a believer is left wholly destitute of comfort, but there is one promise or other that stands ready to minister unto his present wants. Sometimes haply he may want what he strongly desires, yet even then care is taken for his present subsistence; one promise bears the Christian company while another comes. And what cause hath the sick man to complain, though all his friends do not sit up with him together, if they take it by turns, and never leave him without a sufficient number. We read of a *Tree of Life*, Rev. xxii. 2. which *bears twelve manner of fruits, and yields her fruit every month:* So that it is never without some hanging on it. What can this tree be better conceived to be than Christ, who yields all manner of fruit in his promises, and comfort for all times, all conditions. The believer can never come, but he shall find some promise ripe, with which he may well stay his stomach, till the other hangs for further ripening. Here you see the Christian hath provision for all the year. When Christ returned to Heaven, he gave his Disciples this to comfort them, *That he would come again, and carry them with him unto his Father*, where now he lives himself in glory, *John* xiv. 2. This is sweet indeed: But, alas! what shall they do in the mean time to weather out those many storms, which intervene between this promise, and the time when it shall be performed. This, also, our Saviour considered,

dered, and tells them, he does not mean to leave them comfortless, but gives them another promise to keep house with in the mean time, *i. e.* a promise of his spirit, who should be with them on earth, *John* xiv 16. while he took them to be with him in Heaven. The Christian is never at such a loss, wherein hope cannot relieve it; Jer. xvii. 7, 8. *Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is; for he shall be as a Tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.* These waters are the promises from which the believer draws continual matter of comfort, that as a tree, planted by the river, flourisheth, however the year goes, so doth he, whatever God's exterior providence is. Possibly the Christian is in an afflicted state, and the promise for deliverance comes not, yet then hope can entertain him in the absence of that, at the cost of another promise; that though God doth not at present deliver out of the affliction, yet he will support him under it, 1 *Cor.* x. 13. if yet the Christian cannot find this promise paid into such a height, as to discharge him of all impatience, distrust, and other sinful distempers (which, to his grief, he finds too busy in him for all the promise), then hope hath another window to let out the smoke at; and that is by presenting the soul with those promises which assure the weak Christian, that pardoning mercy shall cover those defects which assisting grace did not fully conquer; Mal. iii. 17. *I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.* So Micah vii. 8. *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage?* And certainly God would not have suffered so much impatience to have broke out in *Job*, but that he would have something left for pardoning mercy to do at the close of all, to which that holy man should see himself beholden, both for his deliverance, and that honourable testimony also which God himself gave of him before his uncharitable friends, who, from his great afflictions, and some discomposure of spirit in them, did so unmercifully burthen him with the heavy charge of being an hypocrite.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Contains a Trial of what Metal our Helmet of Hope is made.

FOR trial, Whether we have this helmet of hope on our heads or no; this helmet commended to us in the text. As for such paltry ware, that most are contented with, it deserves not the name of true hope, no more than a paper-cap doth of a helmet. O! look to the metal and temper of your helmet in an especial manner; for at this most blows are made. He that seeks chiefly to defend his own head (the *Serpent* I mean), will aim most to wound your's. None but fools and children are so credulous as to be blown up with great hopes upon slight ground. They who are wise, will be as wary how they place their hopes, especially for salvation, as a prudent pilot, that hath a rich lading, would be where he moors his ship, and casts his anchor. There is reason for our utmost care herein, because nothing exposeth men to more shame, than to meet with disappointment in their hopes; Job vi. 20. *They were confounded, because they had hoped; they came thither and were ashamed;* i. e. to miss of what they hoped to have found in those brooks. But no shame like to that which a false hope for eternal salvation will put sinners to at last; *Some shall rise to shame everlasting*, Dan. xii. They shall awake out of their graves, and out of that fool's paradise also, wherein their vain hopes had entertained them all their lives; and see instead of a Heaven they expected Hell to be in expectation of them, and gaping with full mouth for them. If the servants of *Eglon* were so ashamed after their waiting awhile at their prince's door, to find him and their hopes dead on the floor, *Judges* iii. 25. O! whose heart then can think what a mixture of shame and horror shall meet in their hearts at the great day, who shall see all their hopes for Heaven fled, and leave them in the hands of tormenting Devils to all eternity! *Hannibal*'s soldiers did not so confidently divide the

the goldsmiths' shops in *Rome* among themselves (which they never took) as many presumptuous sinners promise themselves Heaven's bliss and happiness, who must instead thereof sit down with shame in Hell, except they can, before they die, shew better ground for their hope, than now they are able to do. O what will these fond dreamers do in the day of the Lord's anger, when they shall see the whole world in a light flame around them, and hear God (whose piercing eyes will look them through and through) calling them forth before men and angels, to the scrutiny! will they then stand to their hope, and vouch it to the face of Christ, which now they bless themselves so in! surely their hearts will fail them for such an enterprize. None then will speak so ill of them as their own consciences; God will in that day use their own tongues to accuse them, and set forth the folly of their ridiculous hope to the confusion of their faces before all the world. The prophet foretells a time, when *the false prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive, but he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman, &c.* Zech. xiii. 4. 5. Truly, the most notorious false Prophet that the world hath, and deceives most, is this vain hope, which men take up for their salvation. This prophesies of peace, pardon, and heaven, to be the portion of such, as never once entered into God's heart to make heirs thereof; but the day is coming, and it hastens, wherein this false prophet shall be confounded; that the hypocrite shall confess that he never had any hope for salvation, but the idol of his own fancy; and the formalist shall throw off the garment of his profession, by which he deceived himself and others, and appear to himself and all the world in his naked colours. It behoves therefore every one to be strict in the search of his own heart, to find what his hope is built upon.

Now hope of the right make is a rational well grounded hope, 1 Pet. iii. 15. *Be ready alway to give an answer to every man that asketh your reason of the hope that is in you.* Alas, how can they give an answer to others, that have not any to give to their own consciences. Why dost thou hope to be saved, O my soul? There is no Christian, be he never so weak in grace, but hath some reason bottomed on the scripture, for the hope he professeth. Can you be so absurd as to think your own bold presumption, without any word of promise

promise to build upon, can entitle your souls to the inheritance in God's Kingdom? Should one come and say your house and land were his, and shew no writing under your hand by which you did ever grant him a right thereunto, but all he can say, is, he dreamed the last night, that your house and land was his, and therefore now he demands it; would you not think the man mad, and had more right to the Bedlam than to your estate? and yet there are many hope to be saved, that can give no better reason for the same, and such are all grossly ignorant and profane sinners. As it is enough for a Saint to end the trouble which his fears put him into, to ask his soul why he is disquieted within him, would he but observe how little reason his heart can give for the same; so to dismount the bold sinner from his prancing hope, if he might be prevailed with to call himself to an account, and thus to accost his soul, and resolve not to stir without a satisfactory answer: tell me, O my soul, what reason findest thou in the whole bible, for thee to hope for salvation, who livest in ignorance of God, or sin against God? certainly he should find his soul as mute as the man without the wedding garment was at Christ's question. This is the reason why men are such strangers to themselves, and dare not enter into any discourse upon this subject with their own hearts, because they know they shall soon make an uproar in their consciences, that would not be stilled in haste; they cocker their false hearts as much as *David* did his *Adonijah*, who in all his life never displeased him so much as to ask him, Why dost thou so? Nor they their souls to the day of their death, by asking them, soul, why hopest thou so? Or if they have, it hath been as *Pilate* who asked Christ *What was truth*, John xviii but had no mind to stay for an answer. May be thou art an ignorant soul, who knowest neither who Christ is, nor what in Christ hope is to fasten its hold upon; but only with a blind surmise thou hopest, God will be better to thee than to damn thee at last; but why dost thou thus hope, thou canst give no reason. If he will save thee, as now thou art, he must make a new gospel for thy sake; for in this bible it damns thee without hope or help; *The gospel is hid to them that perish*, 2 Cor. iv. But if knowledge will do it, thou haply canst shew good store of that; this is the breast-work under which thou liest, and keepest off those shots which are made at thee from the word, for those lusts thou livest

livest and liest in, as a beast in his dung, defiling thyself with them daily. And is this all thou hast to prove thy hopes for salvation true? Indeed many make no better use of their knowledge of the scripture, than thieves do of the knowledge they have of the law of the land, who study it not that they mean to keep it, but to make them more cunning to evade the charge of it. So many acquaint themselves with the word, especially those passages in it that display the mercy of God to sinners, that with these, they may stuff a pillow to lay their wretched heads on, when the cry of their abominations, in which they live, begins to break their rest. God deliver you, from such hope as this. Surely you mean to provide a better answer to give to Christ at the great day than this, why ye hope to be saved by him; do you not? will thy knowledge, thinkest thou, be as strong a plea for salvation, as thy sins which thou wallowest in against that knowledge will be for thy damnation? If there be hope for such as thee, then come *Judas* and *Jezebel*, yea, Devils, and all ye infernal spirits, and strike in with this good company for a part with them, for some of you can plead more of this than any of them all.

But may be thou hast more yet to say for thyself than this. Thou art not only knowing, but reformed also; the pollutions in which once thou layest, now thou hast escaped, yea, thy reformation is embellished and set forth with a very gaudy profession of religion, both of which have gained thee a very high opinion in the thoughts of all thy neighbours, so that if heaven might be carried by hands, thou couldst haply have a testimonial for thy unblameable and saint-like behaviour among them; yet let me tell thee, if thou meanest to be faithful to thy own soul, thou must not rest in their charitable opinion of thee, not judge of thy hopes for heaven, by what comes under their cognizance, into thy own bosom, and enquire what spring thou canst find there to have been the cause of this change and new motion that hath appeared in thy external conversation. This alone must decide the controversy, and bring thy thoughts to an issue, what to judge of thy hope. It is not a new face that colours our outward behaviour, but a new principle that changeth the frame of the heart within, will evince thy hope to be good and genuine; 1 Pet. i. 3. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, who according to his abundant*

mercy hath begotten us again to a lively hope. The new birth entitles to the new hope; if the soul be dead, the hope cannot be alive. And the soul may be dead, and yet put into a very handsome dress of external reformation and profession, as well as a dead body may be clad with rich clothes. A beggar's son got into the clothes of a rich man's child, may as well hope to be heir to the rich man's land, as thou by an external reformation and profession, to be God's heir in glory. The child's hopes are from his own father, not from a stranger; now while thou art in a natural estate, old *Adam* is thy father; and what canst thou hope from him, who proved worse than nought, and left his poor posterity nothing, except a crazy mortal body, a sinful nature, and a fearful expectation of death, temporal and eternal, from the wrathful hand of a provoked God. O how can you give way that sleep should fall upon your eyes, till you enjoy this relation to God! *Hannah* was a woman of a bitter spirit, till she got a child from God; and hast not thou more reason to be so, till thou art a child of God? Better a thousand times over, that thou shouldest die childless, than fatherless; my meaning is, that thou shouldest leave no child to inherit thy estate on earth, than to have no father to give thee an inheritance in Heaven.

CHAP. IX.

Two Duties pressed upon those, who, upon Trial, find this Grace of Hope in them.

FOR exhortation; and this either respects believers, who are furnished with this helmet; or unbelievers, who yet are without Hope.

First, For you, believers, who, upon trial, are found to have this Helmet of Hope, several duties are to be pressed upon you as such.

SECT.

SECT. I.

First, Be thankful for this unspeakable gift. I will not believe thou hast it, if thy heart be not abundantly let out in thankfulness for it. Blessed *Peter* cannot speak of this, but in a doxology, 1 Pet. i. 3. *Blessed be God, who hath begotten us again to a lively hope, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.* The usual proem to *Paul's* epistles is of this strain, Col. i. 5. Eph. 1. 3. Hast thou Heaven in hope? It is more than if thou hadst the whole world in hand. The greatest monarch the earth hath, will be glad, in a dying hour, to change his crown for thy helmet; his crown will not procure him this helmet, but thy helmet will bring thee to a crown; a crown, not of gold, but of glory, which once on, shall never be taken off, as his is sure to be. O remember, Christian, what but awhile since thou wert; so far from having any hope of Heaven, that thou wert under a fearful expectation of hell and damnation; and are those chains of guilt, with which thy trembling conscience was weighed down unto despair, taken off, and thy head lift up to look for such high preferment in the celestial court of that God, whose wrath thou hadst, by thy horrid treasons, most justly incensed against thee? Certainly of all the men in the world, thou art deepest in debt to the mercy of God: If he will be thanked for a crust, he looks, sure, thou shouldest give him more for a crown. If food and raiment, though coarse and mean, be gratefully to be acknowledged; O, with what ravishment of love and thankfulness, are you to think and speak of those rarities and robes with which you hope to be fed and clad in his heavenly kingdom! especially if you cast your eye aside, and behold those that were once your fellow prisoners, in what a sad and dismal condition they continue in, while all this happines is befallen you! it could not sure but affect his heart into admiration of his Prince's mercy, and undeserved favour to him, who is saved from the gibbet only by his gracious pardon; if as he is riding in a coach towards his Prince's court, he should meet some of his fellow-traitors on sledges, as they are dragging full of shame and horror to execution, for the same

treason in which he had as deep a hand as any of them. And dost not thou see, Christian, many of thy poor neighbours, with whom thou hast had a partnership in sin, pinioned with impenitency and unbelief, driving apace to Hell and destruction, while thou, by the free distinguishing mercy of God, art on thy way for Heaven and glory! O down on thy knees, and cry out, *Lord, why wilt thou shew thyself to me, and not to these!* How easy had it been, and righteous for God, to have directed the pardon to them, and the warrant for damnation unto thee! When thou hast spent thy own breath and spirits in praising God, thou hadst need beg a collection of praises of all thy friends, that have a heart to contribute to such work, that they would help thee in paying this debt; yet all this, with what in heaven thou shalt disburse thyself to all eternity, in better coin than can be expected from thee here; were thy soul is embased with sinful mixtures, it must be accounted rather an acknowledgment of what thou owest to thy God, than any payment of the debt.

SECT. II.

Secondly, Live up to thy hopes, Christian; let there be a decorum kept between thy principles and thy practices; thy hope of heaven and walk on earth. The eye should direct the foot. Thou lookest for salvation; walk the same way thy eye looks. This is so often pressed in the word, as shews both its necessity and difficulty. Sometimes we are stirred up to act *as becometh Saints,* Rom. xvi. 2. Eph. v. 3. Sometimes, *as becometh the Gospel of Christ,* Phil. i. 29. Sometimes, *as becometh those who profess godliness,* 1 Tim. ii. 10. There is a decorum, which if a Christian doth not observe in his walking he betrays his high calling and hopes unto scorn. To look high and to live low, how ridiculous it appears! when a man is dressed on purpose to be laughed at, and made a jeering-stock, they put on him something of the King, and something of the beggar, that by this patchery of mock-majesty, he may appear the greater fool to all the company. And certainly, if the Devil might have the dressing of a man, so as to cast the greater shame and ignominy upon him, yea, upon Christ and the profession of his gospel,

gospel, he could not think of a readier way than to persuade a wretch to pretend to high and glorious hopes of Heaven, and then to have nothing suitable to the high-flown hopes in his conversation, but all base and unworthy of such royal claims. If ye shall see one going into the fields with a helmet of brass on his head, but a wooden sword in one hand, and a paper shield on the other, and the rest of his armour like to these, you would expect he was not likely to hurt his enemies, except they should break their sides with laughing at him. Such a goodly spectacle is the brag professor, who lifts up his head on high, with a bold expectation of salvation, but can shew never a grace beside, to suit with the great hope he hath taken up; he may make the Devil sport, but never do him any great hurt, or himself good.

But, may be you will ask, How is the Christian to live up to his hopes?

I answer, First in general, He is to be careful to do nothing in which he may not freely act his hope, and from the promise expect that God will for Christ's sake, both approve the action, and reward him for it. Ask thy soul this question seriously, before thou engagest in any work; may I hope that God will bid me good speed? Can I look for his countenance in it, and his blessing on it? It is very unworthy of a Christian to do any thing, as if he were afraid God or his conscience should be privy to his work; whatsoever is not of hope, is sin, because it cannot be of faith; O how would this hedge in the Christian's heart from all by-paths! possibly thou hast a grudge against thy neighbour, the fire is kindled in thy heart, though it flames not presently out into bitter words, and angry behaviour, and thou art going to pray; ask now thy soul, whether God will accept that sacrifice which is kindled with such strange fire? yea, bid thy soul bethink herself how thy hopes of pardoning and saving mercy from God can agree with thy wrathful unforgiving spirit towards thy brother? certainly as the sun cannot well be seen through a disturbed air, neither can the eye of hope well see her object, when the soul is tumultuous and roiled with anger.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

Several instances wherein the Christian should comport with, and live up to his Hopes.

SECT. I.

First, IN your company. Man is a sociable creature, made for fellowship. And what company is fit for thee to consort with, but those of the same hopes with thyself. The Saints are a distinct society from the world. *Let ours learn to maintain good works*, Titus iii. 14. Ours, *i. e.* of our fellowship. And it becomes them to seek their company among themselves. That of *Peter* and *John* is observable, Acts iv. 23. *Being let go, they went to their own company.* When among the ungodly world, they made account they were not in their own company, and therefore stayed no longer than needs must among them. There were enough surely in the land of *Canaan* with whom *Abraham* might have associated; but he knew they were not company for him to be linked to in any intimacy; and, therefore, it is said of him, Heb. xi. 9. *that he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.* We find him indeed confederate with *Mamre* the *Amorite*, and *Eschol* and *Aner*, his brethren, *Gen.* xiv. 13. which presupposeth more than ordinary acquaintance. But these, in all probability, were proselytes, and had by *Abraham*'s godly persuasions, renounced their idolatry, to worship, with him, the true God: And we may the rather be induced to think so, because we find them so deeply engaged with *Abraham* in battle against those idolatrous neighbouring Princes, which (had they themselves been idolaters) it is like they would not have done for a stranger, and him of a strange religion also. We find how dearly some of the Saints have paid for their acquaintance with the wicked, as *Jehosaphat* for his intimacy with *Ahab*; and if knowing this, we shall yet associate

ciate ourselves with such, we cannot in reason look to pay less than they have done; yea, well, if we come off so cheap, because we have their follies recorded to make us wiser. O! consider, Christian, whither thou art going in thy hopes: Is it not to Heaven? And do not men seek for such company as go their way? And are the wicked of thy way, when Heaven's way and Hell's meet in one road, then, and not till then, can that be. And if thy companion will not walk in Heaven's-way, what wilt thou do that walkest with him; it is to be feared, thou must comply too much with him in his way. In a word, Christian, thy hope points to Heaven; and is it not one thing thou hopest for, when thou comest there, to be delivered from all company with the wicked? and what thou then hopest for, dost thou not now pray for? Whatever is the object of a Saint's hope, is the subject of his prayer. As often as thou sayest, *Thy kingdom come*, thou prayest thus much: And will hoping and praying, to be delivered from them, stand with intimate familiarity with them?

SECT. II.

Then thou comportest with thy hopes of salvation, when thou labourest to be as holy in thy conversation as thou art high in thy expectation. This the Apostle urgeth from the condescendency of the thing, 2 Pet. iii. 11. *What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for, and hastening unto the coming of the day of God?* Certainly, it becomes such to be holy, even to admiration, who look for such a blessed day; we hope then to be like the Angels in glory, and therefore should, if possible, live now like Angels in holiness. Every believing soul is Christ's spouse. The day of conversion is the day of espousals, wherein she is betrothed by faith to Christ; and as such, lives in hopes for the marriage-day, when he shall come and fetch her home unto his father's house (as *Isaac* did *Rebecca* to his mother's tent) there to cohabit with him, and live in his sweet embraces of love, world without end. Now would the bride have her bridegroom find her in her sluttery and vile raiment? No, sure; *Can a bride forget her attire?* Jer. ii. 32. Was it ever known, that a bride forgot

to have her wedding-clothes made against the marriage-day? or to put them on, when she looks for her bridegroom's coming? Holiness is the *raiment of needle-work*, in which (Christian) thou art *to be brought unto thy King and Husband*, Psalms xlv. 14. Wherefore is the wedding-day put off so long, but because this garment is so long a making? When this is once wrought, and thou ready dressed, then that joyful day comes; *The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready*, Rev. xix. 8. Thou hast not, Christian, a weightier argument to knock down all temptations to sin, nor a more honourable way to get the victory of them. I confess it is well when this enemy is worsted, what hand soever he falls by; though it be the fear of Hell that clubs it down in the lives of men, it is better than not at all; yet I must tell you, that as the *Israelites* state was poor and servile, when they were fain to borrow the *Philistine's grindstone to sharpen every man his axe and mattock*, 1 Sam. xiii. 22. so it speaks the Christian to be in no very good state, as to his spiritual affairs, when he is fain to use the wicked man's argument to keep him from sinning, and nothing will set an edge upon his spirit to cut through temptation, but what the uncircumcised world themselves use. Thou, Christian, art of a more noble spirit than these. And as we have a finer stone to sharpen a razor with, than we use for a butcher's knife; so, certainly, a more spiritual argument would become thee better to make thee keen and sharp against sin, that what prevails with the worst of men sometimes to forbear acting their wickedness. Go thou, Christian, to thy *Hope*, and while the slavish sinner scares and terrifies himself from his lust with fire and brimstone, do thou shame thyself out of all acquaintance with it from the great and glorious things thou lookest for in Heaven. Is it a sin of sensual pleasure that assaults thy castle? Say then to thy soul, shall I play the beast on earth, that hope to be such a glorious creature in Heaven? shall that head be found now in a *Delilah*'s lap, that ere long I hope will be laid in *Abraham*'s bosom? Can I now yield to defile that body with lust and vomit, which is the garment my soul hopes to wear in Heaven? O! no; avaunt Satan, I will have nothing to do with thee, or any thing that will make me unmeet for that blessed place and holy state I wait for.

SECT.

SECT. III.

Let thy hope of Heaven moderate thy affections to earth. *Be sober, and hope*, saith the Apostle, 1 *Pet.* i. 13. You that look for so much in another world, may be very well content with a little in this. Nothing more unbecomes a heavenly hope, than an earthly heart. You would think it an unseeming thing, to see some rich man, that hath a vast estate, among the poor gleaners in harvest time, as busy to pick up the ears of corn that are left in the field, as the most miserable beggar in the company. O! how all the world would cry shame of such a sordid man! well, Christian, be not angry, if I tell thee that thou dost a more shameful thing by far, if thou that pretendest to hope for Heaven, be as eager in the pursuit of this world's trash, as the poor carnal wretch is who expects no portion, but what God hath left him to pick up in the field of this world. Certainly, thy hope is either false, or at best very little. The higher the summer-sun mounts above the horizon, the more force it bears to clear and heat the air with his beams: And if thy hope of salvation were advanced to any ordinary heighth in thy soul, it would scatter these inordinate desires after this world with which now thou art choaked up, and put thee into a greater heat of affection after Heaven. *Augustine* relating what sweet discourse passed once between his mother and himself concerning the joys of Heaven, breaks forth into this apostrophe, *Lord, thou knowest how vile and contemptible this sorry world was in our eye in that day, when our hearts were warmed with some sweet discourse of that blessed place.* And I doubt not but every gracious person finds the same; the nearer to Heaven he gets in his hopes, the further he goes from earth in his desires: When he stands upon these battlements of Heaven, he can look down upon this dunghill world as a little dust-heap, next to nothing. It is *Scultetus's* observation, that though there are many blemishes by which the eminent Saints and servants of God, recorded in Scripture, are set forth as instances of human frailty; yet not one godly man in all the Scripture is to be found, whose story is blotted with the charge of covetous

ness. If that hold true, which I am not able to disprove, we may wonder how it comes about, that it should, now a-days, be called the professor's sin, and become a common charge, laid by the profane upon those that pretend to Heaven more than themselves. O! woe to those wretched men, who, by their scandalous practises in this kind, put the coal into wicked men's hands, with which they now black the names of all the godly, as if to be covetous were a necessary consequent of profession.

SECT. IV.

Let thy hope of Heaven master thy fear of death. Why shouldest thou be afraid to die, who hopest to live by dying. Is the apprentice afraid of the day when his time comes out? he that runs a race, of coming too soon to his goal? the pilot troubled when he see his harbour? or, the betrothed virgin grieved when the wedding-day approacheth? Death, is all this to thee? thy indenture expires, and thy *jubilee* is come; Thy race is run, and the crown won, sure to drop on thy head when thy soul goes out of thy body: Thy voyage, how troublesome soever it was in its sailing, is now happily finished, and death doth but this friendly office for thee, to uncover and open the *Ark* of thy body, that it may safely land thy soul on the shore of eternity at thy heavenly father's door, yea, in his sweet embraces, never to be put to sea more. In a word, thy husband is come for thee, and knocks with death's hand at thy door, to come forth unto him, that he may perform his promise which, in the day of thy betrothing, he made to thee; and thou lovest him but little, if thou be not willing to be at the trouble of a remove hence, for to enjoy his blissful presence in Heaven, where such preparation is made for thy entertainment, that thou canst not know here, though an angel were sent on purpose to inform thee. O! what tongue can express that felicity, which infinite mercy bespeaks, infinite wisdom deviseth, infinite merit procures, and infinite power makes ready. The *Turks* say, *They do not think we Christians believe Heaven to be such a glorious place as we profess and talk of; for if we did, we would not be so afraid to go thither, as they see many*

many that profess themselves Christians, to be. It cannot be denied, but all inordinate fears of death betray great unbelief, and little hope. We do not look upon death under a right notion, and so we start at it, which were we by faith but able to see through, and assure ourselves it comes to do us a good turn; we should feed as comfortably on the thoughts of it, as now we are scared at the apparition of it. The horse eats that hay in the rack, which he is afraid of when a little lies at a distance on the road; because there he knows it, but on the way he doth not. Christian, understand aright what message death brings to thee, and the fear of it will be over; it snatcheth thee indeed from this world's enjoyments, but it leads thee to the felicities of another, incomparably better. And who, at a feast, will chide the servant that takes away the first course, to make room for the second to be set on, that consists of far greater delicacies?

SECT. V.

Then thou comportest with thy hope, when thou livest in the joy of thy hope. A sad heart does not become a lively hope. Let him follow his master with a heavy countenance, that looks to get nothing by his service; thou art out of this fear, and therefore wrongest both thyself and thy God by thy disconsolate spirit, Heb. iii. 6. *Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope, firm unto the end.* Christ takes no more delight to dwell in a sad heart, than we in a dark house; therefore, let in the light which sheds its beams upon thee from the promise, or else thy sweet Saviour will be gone. We do not entertain our friends in a dark room, or sit by those that visit us mopish, lest they should think we are weary of their company. Christ brings such good news with him, as may bespeak better welcome with thee than a disconsolate spirit. Could such a message be carried to the damned, as might give them any hope of salvation, it would make Hell itself a lightsome place, and tune those miserable souls into a rejoicing temper in the midst of their present torments. Blush then, and be ashamed, O! ye drooping Saints, that a few thin clouds of short afflictions, coming over your heads, should so wrap

you up in the darkness of your spirits, as that the hope of Heaven, whither you look to come, should not be able in a moment to dispel and turn your sorrow into a ravishment of joy and comfort.

SECT. VI.

When with thy rejoicing of hope thou preservest an awful fear of God; *The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy,* Psalm cxlvii. 11. We too often see, that children forget to pay that respect and reverence which is due to their parents, when once the estate is made sure unto them. And, truly, though the doctrine of assurance cannot be charged with any such bitter fruit to grow naturally from it, as *Papists* would make us believe, yet we are too prone to abuse it, yea, the best of Saints may, after they have the love of God, with eternal life, passed over to them under the privy seal of hope's assurance, be led so far into temptation, as to fall foully, and carry themselves very undutifully. Witness *David* and *Solomon*, whose saddest miscarriages were after God had opened his very heart to them in such manifestations of love, as few had the like; both are checked by God for this, and a blot left upon their history, on purpose to shew what a sad accent this gave to their sin, that they fell after such discoveries of divine love made to them, and to leave us instances of human frailty, and that in the most eminent Saints, such as were pen-men of holy writ, that when our hope grows into greatest assurance, and this assurance spreads itself into highest rejoicing, from the certainty of our expected glory, we should yet nourish a holy fear of God in our hearts, lest we forget God in the abundance of our peace. This holy fear will be to our joy, as the continual dropping of water on the iron work in the fuller's wheel, which keeps it from firing, or as the *pericardium*, with which the God of nature hath moated about the heart in our bodies, that by the water in it, the heart, which is perpetually in motion, might be kept from being inflamed into a distempered heat. The Devil is pleased if he can at any time get a Saint to sin, but he glorieth most, when he can lay them in the dirt, in their holy-day clothes, and make them defile themselves when they have

have their garments of salvation on, I mean those which God hath in some more than ordinary discovery of himself, clothed them withal; if at such a time he can be too hard for them, then he hath, he thinks, a fair occasion given him to go, and insultingly shew God what pickle his child is in, and hold up the Christian's assurance and comfort mockingly (as they their brother's coat to their father) besmeared with blood and filth of some beastly sin he hath thrown him into, and ask God, is this the assurance thou hast given him of Heaven? and this the garment of salvation which thou didst put on him? see where he hath laid it: O! what gracious soul trembles not at the thought of putting such blasphemy into the mouth of the Devil to reproach the living God by; that Christian is the beloved child, and shall be most made of by his heavenly father, who sits not down to loiter in the sun-shine of divine love, but gathers up his feet the nimbler in the way of duty, because his God is so kind to make his walk more cheerful and comfortable than others, and who loseth not his reverential fear of God, in God's familiarity with him. *Moses*, for instance: Did ever the great God treat a mortal man, a Saint in flesh, with the like familiarity and condescension, as he did that holy man, with whom *he spake mouth to mouth, and before whom he caused all his goodness to pass?* Exod. xxxiv. 6. And how bears he this transcending act of grace? Doth he grow bold, and forget his distance between God and him by this low stoop of the divine majesty, to converse with him in such a humble manner? No, his heart was never more filled with the reverence of God than now: He trembled, indeed, and quaked more (it is very likely) on Mount *Sinai*, but his filial fear was as conspicuous now as then. It is true, this extraordinary manifestation of those soul-ravishing attributes of God's love and goodness, especially his pardoning mercy to him that knew himself a sinner, and at that time made much more sensible thereof by the terror which the dreadful promulgation of the law had left on his spirit, could not but exceedingly heighten his joy, and over-run his soul with a sweet love to so gracious a God: Yet was not *Moses*'s awful fear of God drowned in the high tide of these sweeter affections; *ver.* 8. *And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped.* This favourite of Heaven, mark how he shews

shews his fear of God most, when God expresseth his love to him most.

CHAP. XI.

An Exhortation to strengthen Hope; pressed from three Arguments.

Use 3. LABOUR, O ye Saints, to strengthen your hope. There is as a weak faith, so a wavering hope; this you are by the diligent use of all means to establish. Now then hope is firm and solid, when the Christian doth not fluctuate; but by this anchor-hold, hope hath on the promise, is kept from those dejections and tumultuous fears, with which they that have no hope are swallowed up, and they whose hope is but weak, are sadly discomposed and shaken; that is, a solid body which is compact, and free from heterogenial mixtures. The more pure gold is from dross, and whatever is of a different nature to itself, the more solid it is: So hope, the more it is refined from groundless presumption on the one hand, or slavish fear and distrust on the other, the more solid and strong it is. This, in Scripture, is called, *The assurance of hope.* Now to provoke you to a holy zeal in your endeavour after this.

SECT. I.

First, Consider it is thy duty so to do; by the Papists' doctrine, no man is bound to labour for such an assurance. But whether we should believe God or them, judge ye. What saith the Spirit, Heb vi. 11. *We desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that you be not slothful, but followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promise.* Observe,

First,

First, The thing he exhorts to endeavour for, *to the full assurance of hope.* They whose hope is weak, sail but with a scant side-wind; the Apostle would have them go before the wind, and be carried with a full gale to Heaven; which is done, when the soul, like a sail spread to the wind, is so filled with the truth and goodness of the promise, that it swells into an assured hope of what is promised, and rejoiceth in a certain expectation of what it shall have when it comes to the shore of eternity, though it be now tossed and weather-beaten with a thousand temptations and trials in its passage.

Secondly, Observe whom he presseth this duty upon, not some few choice Christians, as an interprize laid out for them above the rest of their fellow-soldiers; but he lays it on every person that will prove himself a Christian, *We desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence,* &c. In our civil trade, and particular worldly calling, it were sinful for every poor man to propound such a vast estate to himself in his own desires, as he sees some few, the wealthiest merchants have got by their trade, so as no less shall content him. But in the spiritual trade of a Christian, it is very warrantable, for every Christian to covet to be as rich in grace as the best: *Paul* himself will not think himself wronged, if thou desirest to be as holy a man as himself was, and labour after as strong a faith and stedfast a hope as he had; yea, thou oughtest not to content thyself with what thou hast, if there were but one degree of grace more to be had, than what at present thou hast obtained. And,

Thirdly, Observe what he imputes the weakness of the Saint's grace to; not an impossibility of attaining to more, but their sloth and laziness; and, therefore, he opposeth this to that blessed frame of heart he so much wisheth them, *ver.* 12. *That ye be not slothful:* Indeed it is the diligent hand makes rich, as in this world's goods, so in this heavenly treasure also.

SECT. II.

Secondly, Labour to strengthen thy hope of salvation, or thou wilt shew that thou little esteemest Christ and his salvation;

vation; as we prize any good, so we labour more or less to assure ourselves of it. If a prince should lose a pin from his sleeve, or a penny out of his purse, and one should bring him news they are found, the things are so inconsiderable, that he would not care whether it were true or not; but if his kingdom lay at stake in the field, and intelligence comes, that his army hath got the day, and beaten the enemy. O! how he would long to have his hope, that is now raised a little, confirmed more strongly by another post: Is Heaven worth so little, that you can be satisfied with a few probabilities, and uncertain may-be's? Thou basely despisest that blessed place, if thou be no more solicitous to know the truth of thy title to it. When *Micaiah* seemed to give *Ahab* some hope of a victory, by bidding him go up and prosper; the thing being passionately desired by the king, he fears the worst, and, therefore, cannot rest till he know more of this matter. *And the king said unto him, how often shall I adjure thee, that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the Lord,* 1 Kings xxii. 16. May be thou hast some loose wavering hopes of Heaven, floating in thy soul, if now thou didst think thy eternal woe or weal lay in the truth or falshood of that hope, certainly thou wouldest search thy heart by the word, and adjure thy conscience after an impartial review, to tell thee the naked truth, what thy state is, and whether thou mayest, in God's name, and with the leave of his word, hope it shall be thy portion or not; and this thou wouldest do, not hypocritically as that wretched king did (who adjured *Micaiah* to tell him the truth, and then would not believe him, though he did it faithfully) but with great plainness of heart, it being about a business of no less importance than what shall become of thee to eternity. *Peter*, when surprized with the tidings of Christ's resurrection, though the report did not find such credit with him as it might; yet by his speedy running to, and looking into the Sepulchre, he shewed both how dearly he loved his Lord, as also how joyful a man he should be if the news held true, that he was alive. Thus, Christian, though the promise of eternal life hath not hitherto produced such an assurance of hope, that thou art the person that shall undoubtedly enjoy it, yet shew what thoughts thou hast of that blissful state, by endeavouring to strengthen thy hope, and put thee out of doubt thereof.

Thirdly,

SECT. III.

Thirdly, Consider this also, in the last place, That thou knowest not what stress thy hope may be put to before thou diest. The wise mariner doth victual his ship for the longest day; he reckons on cross winds which may retard his voyage, and make it more troublesome, knowing well, it is easier carrying provision to sea, than getting it there. *Non facile inveniuntur in adversitate præsidia, quæ non fuerint in pace quæsita,* a good speech of *Austin.* God himself tells us, *we have need of patience* (he means great store of patience), *that after we have done the will of God, we may receive the promise,* Heb. x. 36. And if of patience, then of hope; because patience bears all on hope's back. Now because we know not the certain degree of hope that will serve our turn (God having purposely concealed the weight of affliction and temptation he intends to lay on us), therefore we should never cease our endeavour to strengthen it. There are hard duties to be performed, and strong trials to be endured, and these require a hope proportionable. We are *to hold fast the rejoicing of our hope unto the end,* Heb. iii. 6. Now will the Christian of weak hope do this? He, alas! is like a leaky ship with a rich lading, the fear of sinking before she gets the port, takes away the owner's joy Bid such an one rejoice in his inheritance that is laid up in Heaven for him, and he will tell you, he questions whether ever he shall come there. Patient waiting for mercy deferred, is another hard duty: *It is good that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.* Now weak hope is short-breathed, and cannot stay long with any quietness. Weak persons are commonly hardest to please; soon peevish and froward, if they have not what they would, when they desire it. When *David*'s faith and hope were under a distemper, then he falls out with all. The prophet himself that brought him the news of a kingdom, cannot escape his censure, and all because the promise staid longer before it was delivered than he expected: *I said in my haste, All men are liars,* Psalm cxvi. whereas the promise went not a day beyond its due time, but he missed of its true reckoning through his inordinate desire; but take him when his

faith and hope are strong, and he is not so hasty, but thinks his estate in God's hand as safe as if it were paid into his own, Psalm lxv. 1. *Praise waiteth for thee, O Lord;* or (as the *Hebrew* may be rendered) *Praise is silent for thee.* As if the holy man had said, Lord, I quietly wait for a time to praise thee; my soul is not in an uproar because thou stayest, I am not murmuring, but rather stringing my harp, and tuning my instrument with much patience and confidence, that I may be ready to strike up when the joyful news of my deliverance come. You have much ado to make the child quiet till dinner, though he sees preparations for a great feast; but one that is grown up will be soon pacified when he is kept a little longer than ordinary from his meal upon such an occasion. O! Christian, it is our childishness and weakness of grace (especially of our hope) that makes us so soon out of patience to wait God's leisure; strengthen hope, and patience will grow with it. In a word, Christian, thou hast great trials and strong temptations to conquer, before you enter heaven-gates. Now defend thy hope, and that will defend thee in these; strengthen that, and that will carry thee through them. The head, every member is officious to preserve; the hands are lift up to keep off the blow, the feet run to carry it from danger, the mouth will receive any unsavoury pill to draw fumes and humours from it. Salvation is to the soul, what the head is to the body, the principal thing it should labour to secure; and hope is to our salvation, what the helmet is to the head. Now, if he be unwise that ventures his head under a weak helmet in the midst of bullets in time of battle, then much more unwise he that hazards his salvation with a weak hope. Know, Christian, the issue of the battle depends on thy hope, if that fail, all is lost. Thy hope is in conflicts with temptations and sufferings, as a prince is amidst his army, who puts life into them all, while he looks on and encourageth them to the battle; but if a report of the king's being slain comes to their ears, their courage fails, and hearts faint; therefore *Ahab* would be held up in his chariot to conceal his danger from his people, the knowledge of which would have cast a damp on their courage. Thy hope is the mark Satan's arrows are levelled at; if possible, keep that from wounding; or, if at any time his dart reach it, and thy spirit begins to bleed of the wound which he hath given thee,

thee, by questioning, whether such great sins can be pardoned as thou hast committed; such old festered sores as thy lusts have been, can be ever cured; or afflictions so heavy, and have continued so long, can possibly be either endured or removed. Now labour to hold up thy hope though wounded in the chariot of the promise, and bow not by despairing, to let the Devil trample on thy soul; so soon as thy hope gives up the ghost, will this cursed fiend stamp thee under his feet, and take his full revenge of thee, and that without any power of thy soul to strike a stroke for thy defence: This will so dis-spirit thee, that thou wilt be ready to throw up all endeavour and attendance on the means of salvation; yea, desperately say, To what purpose is it to think of praying, hearing, and meditating, when there is no hope? What, should we send for the physician when our friend is dead! What good will the chafing and rubbing the body do, when the head is severed from it! The army broke up, and every one was sent to his city, as soon as it was known that *Ahab* was dead. And so wilt thou cast off all thought of making any head against sin and Satan, when thy hope is gone, but fall either into *Judas'* horror of conscience, or with *Cain*, turn Atheist, and bury the thoughts of thy desperate condition in a heap of worldly projects.

CHAP. XII.

Wherein is contained Six Directions, how the Christian may get Hope strengthened.

SECT. I.

First, IF thou meanest thy hope of salvation should rise to any strength and solidness, study the word of God diligently. The Christian is bred by the word, and he must be fed by it, or his grace will die. That is the growing

child that lies libbing oftenest at the breast. Now as God hath provided food in his word to nourish every grace, so he had a particular respect to the welfare and growth of the Saint's hope, as one principal end of their writing, Rom. xv. 4. *That we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.* The Devil knows this so well, that his great labour is spent to deprive the Christian of the help which the word is stored with; and, indeed, therein he is not mistaken; for so long as this river is unblocked up which makes glad the city of God, with the succours that are brought into them on the stream of its precious promises, he can never besiege them round, or put them to any great straights. Some, therefore, he deprives of their relief by mere sloth and laziness; they make a few fruitless complaints of their doubts and fears, like sluggards crying out of their wants and poverty as they lie in bed, but are loth to rise, and take any pains to be resolved of them, by searching of the word for their satisfaction; and these sell their comfort, of all others, the cheapest. Who will pity him, though he should starve to death, that hath bread before him, but loth to put his hand out of his bosom to carry it to his mouth. Others he abuseth by false applications of the word to their souls, partly through their weak understandings, and troubled spirits, which discolour the truths of God, and mis-represent them to their judgments, whereby they come to be beaten with their own staff, even those promises which a skilful hand would knock down Satan's temptations with. The Devil is a great student in divinity, and makes no other use of his Scripture knowledge than may serve his turn by sophistry to do the Christian a mischief, either by drawing him to sin, or into despair for sining; like some wrangling barrister, who gets what skill he can in the law, merely to make him the more able to put honest men to trouble by his vexatious suit. Well, if Satan be so conversant in the word, to weaken thy hope, what reason hast thou then to furnish thyself with a holy skill to maintain and defend thy hope?

Now in thy study of the word, propound these two ends, and closely pursue them.

First, Labour to clear up to thy understanding from the word, what must be experienced by every soul that hath the grant and warrant from God to hope assuredly for life

life and salvation. Something is necessary to be found in all such, or else it were free for all, be they what they will, and live how they list, actually to lay claim to a right in heaven and salvation; if God had set no bounds to *Sinai*, and said nothing who should come up the mount, and who not, it had been no more presumption in any of the company to have gone up than in *Moses*; and if God requires nothing in the person, that is, to hope, then heaven is a common for one as well as another to crowd into; then the beastly sinner may touch God's holy mount as well as the Saint, and fear no stoning for his bold adventure. But this sure is too fulsome doctrine for any judicious conscience to digest. Well, having satisfied thyself, that if ever thou hast true hope, thou must also have the requisites, enquire what they are. Now the word holds forth two sorts according to the two different covenants.

First, There is a covenant of nature, or law covenant, which God made with innocent *Adam*, and the condition of this, was perfect obedience of the person that claimed happiness by it; this is not the condition now required; and he that stands groping at this door, in hope to enter into life by it, shall not only find it nailed up, and no entrance to be had, but also deprives himself of any benefit of that true door, which stands open, and by which all pass that get thither, Gal. v. 5. *Whosoever of you is justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace.* You must therefore enquire what the other covenant is, and that is a covenant of grace, as that other was of nature; of reconciliation to make God and man friends, as that was a covenant to preserve those friends who had never fallen out.

Now the requisites of this covenant (and which are provided for in it) are repentance and faith: see Luke xxiv. 47. John iii. 36. Acts ii. 38. chap. v. 31. xx. 21. Gal. v. 5. Labour therefore to give a firm assent to the truth of these promises, and hold it as an inviolable principle, That whoever sincerely repents of his sins, and with a faith unfeigned, receiveth Christ to be his Lord and Saviour, this is the person that hath the word and oath of a God, that cannot possibly lie, for the pardon of his sins, and salvation of his soul. What service a strong assent to this will do thee towards exerting thy hope, thou wilt by and by see: it is the very basis thereof; the weight of the Christian's whole building bears so much on this, that the

the spirit of God, when he speaks in scripture of evangelical truths and promises, on which poor sinners must build their hopes for sa ation, he doth it with the greatest averment of any other truths, and usually adds some circumstance or other that may put us out of all doubt concerning the certainty of them. Isaiah liii. 5. *Surely he hath borne our griefs ;* there is no question to be made of it, it was our potion that he drank, our debt he paid. What end could he have besides, in so great sufferings ? Was it to give us a pattern of patience how we should suffer ? This is true, but not all, for some of our fellow Saints have been admirable instances of this Surely there was more than this, He bare our sorrows, and was wounded for our transgressions. This, this was the great business, worthy of the Son of God's undertaking, which none of our fellow Saints could do for us. So 1 Tim. i. 15. *This is a faithful saying, and worthy all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.* As if he had said, Fear no cheat or imposture here, it is as true as truth itself ; for such is he that said it ; if you believe not this, you are worse than a Devil. He cannot shut this truth out of his conscience, though the unwelcomest that ever came to his knowledge, 1 John i. 9. *If we confess our sins, he is just and faithful to forgive us our sins.* What can the poor penitent fear, when that attribute is become his friend, that first made God angry with him ? Yea, so fast a friend as to stand bound for the performance of the promise, which was so deeply engaged to execute the threatening on him ? Heb. vi. 17. *Wherein, God willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath.* What security could we have asked more of a deceitful man, than the faithful God of his own accord gives ? The *Romans* did not give their magistrates oaths, supposing the dignity and honour of their persons and place were bond strong enough to make them true and righteous. Surely then God's word would have deserved credit, though it had not an oath to be its surety, yet God condescends to this, that he may sink the truth of what he saith deeper into our minds, and leave the print fairer and fuller in our assents to the same, when set on with the weight of asseverations and oaths.

Secondly

Secondly, Having found what are the requisites of the covenant, rest not satisfied, till thou findest these are wrought in thy own soul, and art able to say thou art this repenting and believing sinner. A strong hope results from the clear evidence it hath for both these. We read in scripture of a threefold assurance.

First, An assurance of understanding, Col. ii. 2.

Secondly, An assurance of faith, Heb. x. 22.

Thirdly, An assurance of hope, Heb. vi. 11.

And it is a good note which an acute Doctor hath upon them, *That these three make up one practical Sylogism, wherein, Knowledge forms the preposition, Faith makes the assumption, and Hope draws the conclusion,* D. A. *Tac. Sa.* p. 126. I do (saith the Christian assuredly) know from the word, that the repenting believing sinner shall be saved; my conscience also tells me, that I do unfeignedly repent and believe, therefore I do hope firmly that I shall (however unworthy) be saved. Now we know there can be no more in the conclusion, than is in the premises; so that as the force is which the Christian puts forth in his assent to the truth of the promise, and the evidence is, which he hath that the condition of the promise (viz. faith and repentance) is wrought in his soul, so will his hope be weak or strong. If his assent to the truth of the promise be weak, or his evidence for the truth of his faith and repentance be dark and uncertain, his hope that is born (as I may say) of these, must needs partake of its parent's infirmities, and be itself weak and wavering.

SECT. II.

Direction 2. Wouldst thou have thy hope strong? Then keep thy conscience pure. Thou canst not defile this, but thou wilt weaken that. Living godly in this present world, and looking for the blessed hope laid up for us in the other, are both conjoined, Tit. ii. 13, A soul wholly void of godliness, must needs be as destitute of all true hope; and the godly person that is loose and careless in his holy walking, will soon find his hope languishing. All sin is anguish meat; it disposeth the soul that tampers with it, to trembling fears, and shakings of heart: But such as are deliberately

liberately committed and plotted, they are to the Christian's hope, as poison to the spirits of his body, which presently drinks them up. They, in a manner, exanimate the Christian: they make the thoughts of God terrible to the soul, which, when he is in an holy frame, are his greatest joy. *I thought on God and was troubled,* Psalm lxxvii. 3. They make him afraid to look on God in a duty, much more to look for God in the day of judgment. Can the servant be willing his master should come home, when he is in his riot and excess? *Mr. Calvin,* when some wished him to forbear some of his labours, especially his night-studies, asked those friends, Whether they would have his Lord find him idle, when he came? O God forbid, Christian, that death should find thee wanton and negligent in thy walking, that he should surprize thee lying in the puddle of some sin. O how loth wouldst thou then be to die, and go to the great audit, where thou must give up thy accounts for eternity! will thy hope then be in case to carry thee up with joy to that solemn work? Can a bird fly, when one of her wings is broke? Faith and a good conscience are hope's two wings; if therefore thou has wounded thy conscience by any sin, renew thy repentance, that so thou mayest act faith for the pardon of it, and acting faith, mayest redeem thy hope, when the mortgage that is now upon it shall be taken off. If a *Jew* had pawned his bed-cloaths, God provided mercifully, it should be restored before night, *For* (saith he) *that is his covering; wherein shall he sleep?* Ex. xxii. 27. Truly hope is the Saint's covering, wherein he wraps himself, when he lays his body down to sleep in the grave: *My flesh* (saith *David*) *shall rest in hope,* Psalm xvi. 9. O Christian, bestir thyself to redeem thy hope before this sun of thy temporal life go down upon thee, or else thou art sure to lie down in sorrow. A sad going to the bed of the grave he hath, that hath no hope of a resurrection to life.

SECT. III.

Thirdly, Resort to God daily, and beg a stronger hope of him: That is the way the Apostle took to help the Saints to

to more of this precious grace, Rom. xv. 13. *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.* God you see is the God of hope; and not only of the first seed and habit, but of the abounding of it in us also: He doth not give a Saint the first grace of conversion, and then leave the improvement of it wholly to his skill and care; as sometimes a child hath a stock at first to set up, and never hath more help from his father, but by his own good husbandry advanceth his little beginnings into a great estate at last. But rather as the corn in the field, that needs the influences of Heaven to flower and ripen it for harvest, as much as to quicken it in the clods when first thrown in: And therefore be sure thou humbly acknowledgest God by a constant waiting on him for growth. *The young lions are said to seek their meat from God,* Psalm. civ. 2. That is, God hath taught them, when hungry to express their wants by crying and lifting up their voice, which, did they know God to be their maker, they would direct to him for supply. As we see the little babe that at first only expresseth its wants by crying, soon as it knows the mother, direct its moan to her: thou knowest Christian that thou art at thy heavenly Father's finding. He knows indeed what thou wantest, but he stays his supplies till thou criest, and this will make him draw forth his breast presently. Doth God take care for beasts in the field? Surely then much more will he for thee his child, and for thy soul above all. Thou mayest possibly pray for more riches, and be denied; but a prayer for more grace is sure to speed.

SECT. IV.

Fourthly, If you would strengthen your hope, labour to encrease your love. There is a secret, yet powerful influence that love hath on hope. *Moses* greatly befriended the *Israelite,* when he slew the *Egyptian,* that fought with him. Love kills slavish fear, one of the worst of enemies hope hath in the Christian's heart, and thereby strengthens hope's hand. He that plucks up the weeds, helps the corn to grow: And he that purges out the disease, makes way

for nature's strengthening. It is slavish fear oppresseth the Christian's spirit that he cannot act hope strongly. Now, *love casts out fear*, 1 John iv. 18. The free-woman will cast out the bond-woman. Slavish fear is one of *Hagar's* breed, an affection that keeps all in bondage that hath it; this love cannot brook. Shall I, saith the loving soul, fear he will hurt me, or be hard to me, that loves me, and I him so dearly? Away unworthy thoughts, here is no room for such company as you are in my bosom. *Love thinketh no ill!* 1 Cor. xiii. 5. That is, it neither wisheth evil to, nor suspects evil of another. The more thou lovest Christ, the less thou wilt be jealous of him; and the less jealous thou art of him, the more strongly wilt thou hope in him, and comfortably wait for him. Hence these two graces are so often meted in Scripture, 2 Thess. iii. 5. *The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and patient waiting for Christ.* Love him, and you will wait for him. So *Jude* xxi. *Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus unto eternal life.*

SECT. V.

Fifthly, Be much in the exercise of your hope. Repeated acts strengthen habits. Thus the little waddling child comes to go strongly by going often. You have no more money in your chest at the year's end than when you left it there, nay it is well if rust or thieves have not made it less. But you have more by trading with it than your first stock amounted unto. *Thou shouldest have put my money to the Exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received my own with usury*, saith *Christ* to the *slothful servant*, Matt. xxv. 27. Now the promises are hope's object to act upon. A man can as well live without air, as faith and hope without a promise; yea, without frequent sucking in the refreshment of the promises, and therefore be much in meditation of them; set some time apart for the purpose. You that love your healths, do not content yourselves with the air that comes to you as you sit at work in your house, but you will walk out into the fields sometimes, to take the air more fresh. And if thou be a wise Christian, thou wilt not

not satisfy thyself with the short converse thou hast by the by with the promises, as now and then they come into thy mind in thy calling, but wilt walk aside on purpose to enjoy a more fixed meditation of them. This were of admirable use, especially if the Christian hath skill to sort the promises, and lay aside the provision made in them suitable to his case in particular. Sometimes the Christian is at a stand when he remembers his past-sins, and his hope is quite dashed out of countenance while they stare on his conscience. Now it were excellent for the Christian to pick out a promise, where he may see this objection answered, and hope triumphing over it. This was *David's* case, Psalm cxxx. he grants himself to be in a most deplored condition, if God should reckon with him strictly. *If thou Lord shouldest mark iniquities, who can stand? ver.* 3.

But ver. 4. He puts his soul out of all fear of God's taking this course with poor penitent souls, by laying down this comfortable conclusion, as an indubitable truth. *But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.* That is, there is forgiveness in thy nature, thou carriest a pardoning heart in thy bosom: Yea, there is forgiveness in thy promise; thy merciful heart doth not only incline thee to thoughts of forgiving; but thy faithful promise binds thee to draw forth the same unto all that humbly lay claim thereunto. Now, this foundation laid, see what superstructure this holy man raiseth, ver. 5. *I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.* As if he had said, Lord, I take thee at thy word, and am resolved by thy grace to wait at this door of thy promise, never to stir thence till I have the forgiveness of my sins set out unto me. And this is so sweet a morsel, that he is loth to eat it alone, and therefore he sets down the dish, even to the lower end of the table, that every godly person may taste with him. ver. 7. 8. *Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.* As if he had said, that which is a ground of hope to me, notwithstanding the clamour of my sins, affords as solid and firm a bottom to any sincere soul in the world, did he but rightly understand himself, and the mind of God in his promise. Yea, I have as strong a faith for such as my own soul, and durst pawn the eternity of its happiness upon this principle, That God

shall redeem every sincere *Israelite* from all his iniquities. This, this is the way to knock down our sins indeed, and Satan when he comes to reproach us with them, and by their batteries to dismount our hope. Sometimes a qualm comes over the Christian's heart merely from the greatness of the things hoped for. What? saith the poor soul, seems it a small thing for me to hope, that of an enemy I should become a son and heir to the great God! What? a rebel! and not only hope to be pardoned, but prove a favourite, yea, such an one as to have robes of glory in heaven, where I shall stand among those that minister about the throne of God in his heavenly court. O it is too good news to prove true. Thus the poor soul stands amazed, as the *Disciples*, when the first tidings of the *Lord's* resurrection surprized them, and is ready to think its hope but an idle tale with which Satan abused it. That he may presume to hope, and perish with his presumption.

Now Christian, that thou mayest be able to stride over this stumbling block: be sure to observe those prints of God's greatness and infinitude that are stamped upon the promise; sometimes you have them expressed, on purpose to ease our hearts of this scruple. When God promised great things what he would do for *Abraham;* to make them more credible he adds, *I am God Almighty*, Gen, xvii. 1. so Isaiah lv. 7. *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and unto God, for he will abundantly pardon.* But how can this possibly be done, that in the turn of a hand, as it were, such a great favour can be obtained, which among men could hardly be done in a life-time? O that is easily answered. He tells you he is not a sorry man, but a God, and hath a way by himself in pardoning wrongs, which none can follow him in; for it is as far above our ways as the Heavens are above the earth. This, Christian, observe, and it will be a key to unlock all promises, and let you in to the untold treasures that are in them; yea, make the greatest promise in the bible easy to be believed. When ever you read any promise, remember whose bond it is, the word of no other than God. And when you think on God, be sure you do not narrow him up in the little compass of your finite apprehensions, but conceive of him always as an infinite being, whose centre is every

every where, and circumference no where. When you have raised your thoughts to the highest, then know you are as far, yea, infinitely farther from reaching his glory and immensity, than a man is from touching the body of the sun with his hand when got upon a mountain. This is to ascribe greatness to God, as we are commanded, Deut. xxxii. 3. And it will admirably facilitate the work of believing. Suppose a poor cripple should be sent for by a prince to court, with a promise to adopt him for his son, and make him heir to his crown; this might well seem incredible to the poor man, when he considers what a leap it is from his beggar's cottage to the state of a prince; no doubt if the promise had been to prefer him to a place in an hospital, or some ordinary pension for his maintenance, it would be easier credited, as more proportionable to his low condition; yet the greatness of the Prince, and the delight that such take to be like God himself, by shewing a kind of creating power to raise some, as it were, from nothing, unto the highest honour a subject is capable of, thereby to oblige them, as their creatures, to their service. This might help such a one to think this strange accident not altogether impossible. Thus should a poor soul spend all his thoughts on his own unmeetness and unworthiness to have Heaven and eternal life conferred on him, it were not posssble he should ever think so well of himself, as that he should be one of those glorious creatures that were to enjoy it; but when the greatness of God is believed, and the infinite pleasure he takes to demonstrate that greatness, by making miserable creatures happy, rather than by perpetuating their miseries in an eternal state of damnation, and what cost he hath been at to clear away for his mercy freely to act in; and in a word, what a glorious name this will gain him in the thoughts of those he thus exalts. These things (which are all to be found in the word of promise) well weighed, and acknowledged, cannot but open the heart, though shut with a thousand bolts, to entertain the promise, and believe all is truth that God saith. You see how the promises may be suited to answer the particular objections raised against our hope; it were easy to multiply instances, and to pattern any other case with promises for the purpose; but this will be most effectually done by you, who know your own scruples better than any other; and

and be such true friends to your own souls, as to take a little pains therein. The labour in gathering a few simples in the field, and making them up into a medicine by the direction of the physician, is very well paid for, if the poor man finds it restores him to health.

SECT. VI.

Sixthly, File up thy experiences of past mercies, and thy hope will grow stronger for the future, *Experience worketh hope,* Rom. v. 4. He is the best Christian that keeps the history of God's gracious dealings with him most carefully, so that he may read it in his past experiences, when at any time his thoughts trouble him, and his spiritual rest is broken with distracting fears for the future. This is he that will pass the night of affliction and temptation with comfort and hope, while others, that have taken no care to pen down in their memories the remarkable instances of God's love and favour to them in the course of their lives, will find the want of this sweet companion in their sorrowful hours, and be put to sad plunges; yea, well if they be not driven to think their case desperate, and past all hope. Sometimes a little writing is found in a man's study that helps to save his estate, for want of which he had gone to prison. And some one experience remembered, keeps the soul from despair, a prison which the Devil longs to have the Christian in: *This I recall, therefore have I hope,* Lam. iii. 21. *David* was famous for his hope, and not less eminent for his care to observe and preserve the experiences he had of God's goodness. He was able to recount the dealings of God to him; they were so often the subject of his meditation, and matter of his discourse, that he had made them familiar to him. When his hope is at a loss, he doth but rub his memory up a little, and he recovers himself presently, and chides himself for his weakness, *I said, this is my infirmity, but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High,* Psalm lxxvii. The hound when he hath lost the scent, hunts backward, and so recovers it, and pursues his game with louder cry than ever. Thus, Christian, when thy hope is at a loss, and thou questionest thy salvation

tion in another world, then look backward, and see what God hath already done for thee. Some promises have their day of payment here, and others we must stay to receive in Heaven. Now the payment which God makes of some promises here, is an earnest given to our faith, that the other also shall be faithfully discharged when their date expires; as every judgment inflicted here on the wicked, is sent as a penny in hand of that wrath, the full sum whereof God will make up in Hell. Go therefore, Christian, and look over thy receipts. God hath promised, *Sin shall not have dominion over you,* Rom. vi. 14. It is the present state of a Saint in this life intended there; canst thou find this promise made good to thee? Is the power of sin broke, and the sceptre wrung out of this king's hand, whom once thou as willingly obeyed as ever subject his prince? Yea, canst thou find that he hath but begun to fall by thy unthroning him in thy heart and affections? Dost thou now look on sin not as thou wert wont for thy prince, but as an usurper, whose tyranny, by the grace of God, thou art resolved to shake off, both as intolerable to thee, and dishonourable to God, whom thou now acknowledgest to be thy rightful Lord, and to whose holy laws thy heart most freely promiseth obedience? This, poor soul, may assure thee, that thou shalt have a full dominion over sin in Heaven, which hath begun already to lose his power over thee on earth. It is observable how *David* rears up his hope to expect Heaven's perfect state of holiness, from his begun-sanctification on earth.

First, He declares his holy resolution for God, and then his high expectation from God, Psalm xvii. 15. *As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness.* Hast thou found God's supporting hand in all thy temptations and troubles, whereby thou art kept from sinking under them? *David* would feed his hope for eternal salvation with this, Psalm lxxiii. 23. *Thou hast holden me by my right hand:* Now observe hope's inference, *ver.* 24. *Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.*

And as experiences carefully kept, and wisely improved, would conduce much to the strengthening the Christian's hope of salvation; so also would they lift up its head above all those distracting fears which arise in the Christian's heart,

heart, and put him to much trouble, from those cross and afflicting providences that befal him in this life. Certainly *David* would have been more scared with the big looks and brag deportment of that proud *Goliath*, had not the remembrance of the bear and the lion, which he slew, brought relief to him, and kept them down. But he had slain this uncircumcised *Philistine* in a figure, when he tore in pieces those unclean beasts; and, therefore, when he marches to him, this is the shield which he lifts up to cover himself with, 1 Sam. xvii. 37. *The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.* If experiences were no ground for hope in future straights, then they would not have the force of an argument in prayer; but Saints use their experiences, and make account they urge God very close and home, when they humbly tell him what he hath already done for them, and expect he should therefore go on in his fatherly care over them, Psalm xxii. 21. *Save me from the lion's mouth, for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns:* And, no doubt, a gracious soul may pray in faith from his past experience, and expect a satisfactory answer to that prayer, wherein former mercies are his plea for what he wants at present. God himself intends his people more comfort from every mercy he gives them, than the mercy itself, abstractly considered, amounts to. Suppose, Christian, thou hast been sick, and God hath at thy humble prayer plucked thee out of the jaws of death; the comfort of this particular mercy is the least God means thee therein; for he would have thee make it a help to thy faith, and a shore to thy hope, when shaken by any future straight whatever, Psalm lxxiv. 14. *Thou breakest the head of the Leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the Wilderness.* God in that mercy at the Red Sea, is thinking what *Israel* should have to live on forty years together, and look that they should not only feast themselves at present with the joy of this stupendous mercy; but ponder it up in their memories, that their faith might not want a meal in the Wilderness all the while they were to be in it. Experiences are like a cold dish reserved at a feast; sometimes the Saint sits down with nothing else on his table, but the promise, and his experience; and he that cannot make a soul-refreshing meal with these, deserves to fast. Be sure, Christian,

tian, thou observest this in every mercy, what is matter of present thankfulness, and what is ground of future hope. *Achor* is called, *A door of hope*, Hosea ii. 15. God, when he gives one mercy, opens a door for him to give, and us to expect, more mercy through it. God compares his promise *to the rain which maketh the earth bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater*, Isa. lv. 10. Why shouldest thou content thyself with half the benefit of a mercy! When God performs his promise, and delivers thee out of this trouble, and that straight, thou art exceedingly comforted, and thy heart possibly enlarged into thankfulness for the same. It is well; here is *bread for the eater*, something that at present feasts thee. But where is *the seed for the sower*? The husbandman doth not spend all his corn that he reaps, but saves some for seed, which may bring him another crop: So, Christian, thou shouldest not only feast thyself with the joy of thy mercy, but save the rememberance of it as hope-seed, to strengthen thee to wait on God for another mercy, and further help in a needful time.

CHAP. XIII.

An Objection answered, with two or three Reflections useful for our improving Experience.

BUT you will possibly say, How can a Saint's past experience be so helpful to his hope for the future, when God (we see) often crosseth the Saint's experiences? He delivers them out of one sickness, and takes them away may be with the next; he saves them in one battle without scratch, and in another, a-while after, they are killed or wounded; how then can a Saint ground and bottom his hope from a past deliverance, to expect deliverance in the like straight again?

First, There is the same power still in God, that was then; what he did once for thee, he can with as much ease

do again; and this is one way thy experiences may help thee. Thou hast seen God make bare his arm, so that except thou thinkest that he since hath lost the strength or use of it, and is become at last a God with a lame hand, hope hath an object to act upon, and such an one as will lift thy head above water. Indeed the soul never drowns in despair, till it hath lost its hold on the power of God; when it questions whether God will deliver, this is a sad leak, and will let in a thousand fears into the soul; yet so long as the Christian can use this pump, I mean, act faith on the power of God, and believe that God can deliver when he pleases; though it will not clear the ship of his soul of all its fears, yet it will keep it from quite sinking, because it will preserve him in a seeking posture, *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean*, Mark i. and for thee to say, God cannot deliver, who hast been an eye-witness to what he hath done, were not only to betray thy great unbelief, but to forfeit thy reason also.

But, to give a more close answer to the question. The Saint, from his former experiences (even of temporal salvations) may, yea ought not only believe that God can, but also that he will save him in all future straights and dangers of this nature; only, he cannot conclude that he will do it in the same way as in former deliverances. And none, I hope, will say, if he hath deliverance, that his experiences are crossed, because God doth use another method in the conveyance of it to them. A debt may be fully satisfied, as with money, so with that which is money-worth, except the bond restrains the payment otherwise. Now, there is no clause to be found in any promise for temporal mercies, that binds God to give them *in specie*, or in kind. Spiritual mercies (such I mean as are saving and essential to the Saint's happiness), these, indeed, are promised to be given in kind, because there is nothing equivalent that can be paid in lieu of them; but temporal mercies are of such an inferior nature, that a compensation and recompence may be easily given in their stead: Yea, God never denies these to a Saint, but for abundant advantage. Who will say the poor Saint is a loser, whose purse God denieth to fill with gold, but filleth his heart with contentment? or the sick Saint, when God saves him, not by restoring to former health, but by translating to Heaven?

I shall

I shall wind up this head with two or three reflections to be used by the Christian, for his better improving past experiences when he is at a plunge.

First, Look back to thy past experiences, and enquire whether thou canst not find, that thy God hath done greater matters for thee, than this which thou now hast so many disquieting fears and despairing thoughts about. I will suppose thy present straight great; but wert thou never in a greater, and yet God did at last set thy feet in a large place? Thou art now in a sad and mournful posture, but hath not he brightened a darker cloud than this, and led thee out of it into a state of light and joy? Surely, thy staggering hope may prevent a fall by catching hold of this experience. Art thou not ashamed to give thyself up for lost, and think of nothing but drowning in a less storm than that out of which God hath formerly brought thee safe to land? See *David* relieving his hope by recognizing such an experiment as this, *Thou hast saved my soul from death, wilt thou not keep my feet from falling?* Psalm lvi. 13. Hast thou given me the greater, and wilt thou not the less. Haply thy present fear is apostacy; thou shalt one day fall by the hand of thy sins, this runs in thy thoughts, and thou canst not be persuaded otherwise. Now it is a fit time to recal the day of God's converting grace. Darest thou deny such a work to have passed upon thee? If not, why then shouldst thou despair of perseverance? that was the day wherein he saved thy soul; *This day* (saith Christ to *Zaccheus*) *is salvation come to thy house*, Luke xix. 9. And did God save thy soul by converting grace, and will he not keep thy feet from falling, by his sustaining grace? Was it not both more mercy and power to take thee out of the power of sin and Satan, than it will cost him to preserve thee from falling into their hands again? Surely, the *Israelites* would not so often have feared provision in the wilderness, had they remembered with what a high hand God did bring them out of *Egypt*. But may be, it is some outward affliction that distresseth thee; is it greater than the church's was, in cruel bondage and captivity? yet she had something to recal, that put a new life into her hope, Lam. iii. *God is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope.* See she makes a spiritual mercy (because incomparably greater of the two) a ground of hope for temporal salvation which is less. And hast not thou chosen him for thy portion? Dost thou not look for a heaven to enjoy

him in for ever? And can any dungeon of outward affliction be so dark, that this hope will not enlighten? Recal thy experiences of his love to thy soul, and thou canst not be out of hope for thy body and outward condition. He that hath laid up a portion in heaven for thee, will lay out surely all the expences thou needest in thy way thither.

Secondly, Remember how oft God hath confuted thy fears, and proved thy unbelief a false prophet. Hath he not knocked at thy door with inward comfort and outward deliverances, when thou hadst put out the candle of hope, given over looking for him, and been ready to lay thyself down on the bed of despair; thus he came to *Hezekiah*, after he had peremptorily concluded his case desperate, Is. xxxviii. 10, 11. Thus to the disciples in their unbelieving dumps, *We trusted it had been he which should have redeemed Israel*, Luke xxiv. 21. They speak as if now they were in doubt whether they should own their own former faith or no; hath it not been thus with thee? wert thou never at so sad a pass, the storm of thy fears so great, that the anchor of hope even came home, and left thee to feed with misgiving and despairing thoughts, as if now thy everlasting night were come, and no morning tale more expected by thee? yet even then thy God proved them all liars, by an unlooked for surprize of mercy, with which he stole sweetly in upon thee? If so, press and urge this experience home upon thyself to encourage thy hope in all future temptations. What, O my soul! (thou shouldst say) wilt thou again be scared with these false alarms?

Again, lend an ear to thy distrustful desponding thoughts which so oft thou hast found liars, rather than believe the report of the promise, which never put thy hope to shame, as these have done. The Saints are oft feeding their hopes on the carcase of their slain fears. The time which God chose, and the instrument he used to give the captive *Jews* their gaol-delivery and liberty to return home, were so incredible to them, who now looked rather to be ground in pieces by those two mill-stones, the *Babylonian* within, and the *Persian* without the city, that when it came to pass, (like *Peter* whom the *Angel* had carried out of prison, Acts xii.) it was some time before they could come to themselves and resolve whether it was a real truth or but a pleasing dream

dream, Psalm cxxvi. 1. Now see, what effect this strange disappointment of their fears had upon their hope.

First, It sends them to the throne of grace for the accomplishment of what was so marvellously begun, ver. 3, 4. *The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad. Turn again our captivity, O Lord.* They have got a hand-hold by this experiment of his power and mercy, and they will not now let him go till they have more; yea, their hope is raised to such a pitch of confidence, that they draw a general conclusion from this particular experience for the comfort of themselves, or others in any future distress, *They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy; he that goeth forth and weepeth, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him, ver.* 6.

Thirdly, Remember what sinful distempers have broke out in thy afflictions and temptations, and how God hath, notwithstanding these, carried on a work of deliverance for thee. So that thou mayest say, in respect of these enemies in thy bosom, what *David* spake triumphantly in regard of his enemies without, that *God hath prepared a table for thee in the presence of thy enemies,* yea, of his enemies: While thy corruptions have been stirring and acting against him, his mercy hath been active for thy deliverance. O what a cordial draught would this be to thy fainting hope! that which often sinks the Christian's heart in any distress, inward or outward, and even weighs down his head of hope that he cannot look up to God for help and succour at such a time, is the sense of those sinful infirmities which then discover themselves in him. How, saith the poor soul, can I look that God should raise me out of this sickness, wherein I have betrayed so much impatience and frowardness? Or out of that temptation, in which I have so little exercised faith, and discovered so much unbelief? Surely I must behave myself better, before any good news be sent from heaven to me. It is well, thou art so sensible of thy sins as to be thy own accuser, and prevent Satan's doing it for thee; yet be not opprest into discouragement by them. Remember, how God hath answered the like objections formerly, and saved thee with a notwithstanding; if these could have hardened his bowels against thee, hadst thou been alive, yea, out of Hell at this day? Didst thou ever receive a mercy of which God might not have made stop-

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page upon this very account that makes thee now fear he will not help thee? Or if thou hast not an experience of thy own at hand, which were strange, then borrow one of other Saints; *David* is an instance beyond exception. This very circumstance with which his deliverance was enamelled, did above all affect his heart, *I said in my haste, all men are liars; what shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?* Psalm cxvi. 11, 12. He remembered his sinful and distempered carriage, and this he mentions, to take shame for the same, so to wind up his heart to the highest pitch of thankfulness: He knows not how to praise God enough for that mercy which found him giving the lie to God's messenger, even *Samuel* himself that was sent to tell him it was a coming. And he doth not only make this circumstance an incentive to praise, for what is past; but lays it down as a ground of hope for the future, Psalm xxxi. *I said in my haste, I am cut off from thine eyes, nevertheless thou heardst the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee.* As if he had said, When I prayed with so little faith, that I, as it were, unprayed my own prayer, by concluding my case in a manner desperate; yet God pardoned my hasty spirit, and gave me that mercy which I had hardly any faith to expect: And what use doth he make of this experience, but to raise every Saint's hope in a time of need? *Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord,* ver. 24.

CHAP. XIV.

An Exhortation to them that want this Helmet of Hope.

BE you exhorted that are yet without this helmet to provide yourselves with it. Certainly if you be in your right wits, it is the first thing you will go about, and that with sober

sober sadness, especially may, but three considerations take place in your thoughts.

SECT. I.

First, How deplored a thing it is to be in a hopeless state. The Apostle, Ephes. ii. 12. makes him to be without God, that is without hope, having no hope and being without God in the world. God to the soul is, what the soul is to the body, if that be so vile, and noisome a thing, when it hath lost the soul that keeps it sweet; what is thy soul when nothing of God is in it? *The heart of the wicked is little worth* (saith *Solomon*), and why! but because it hath not God to put a value on it. If God, who is light, be not in thy understanding, thou art blind, and what is an eye whose sight is out fit for, but to help thee to break thy neck? If God be not in thy conscience to pacify and comfort it, thou must needs be full of horror or void of sense; a raging devil, or a stupid Atheist: If God be not in thy heart and affections to purify them, thou art but a sink of sin. If God be not in thee, the Devil is, for man's heart is a house that cannot stand empty. In a word, thou canst not well be without this hope, neither in life nor death; not in life, what comfort canst thou take in this life, without the hope of a better? A sad legacy it is which shuts the rebellious child from all claim to the inheritance. Thou hast an estate, it may be, but it is all you must look for. And is it not a dagger at the heart of thy joy, to think thy portion is paid thee here, which will be spent by that time the Saint comes to receive his? Much less tolerable is it to be without this hope in a dying hour; who can without horror think of leaving this world, though full of sorrows, that hopes for no ease in the other? The condemned malefactor, as ill as he likes his smoaky hole in the prison, had rather be there, than accept of deliverance at the hangman's hand; he had rather live still in his stinking dungeon, than exchange it for a gibbet, And greater reason hath the hopeless soul (if he understands himself) to wish he may spend his eternity on earth, though in the poorest hole in it, and that under the most exquisite torment of stone, then to be eased of that pain with Hell's torment. Hence

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is the sad confusion in the thoughts of guilty wretches, when their souls are summoned out of their bodies: This makes the very pangs of death stronger than they would be, if these dear friends had but a hopeful parting; if the shriek and mournful out-cry of some friends in the room of a dying man, may so disturb him as to make his passage more terrible; how much more then must the horror of the sinner's own conscience, under the apprehensions of that Hell whither it is going, amaze and affright him! There is a great difference between a wife's parting with her husband, when called from her to live at court under the shine of his Prince's favour, whose return after a while she expects with an accumulation of wealth and honour, and another, whose husband is taken out of her arms to be dragged to prison and torment.

Is this thy case, and art thou cutting thy short life out into chips, and spending thy little time upon trifles, when the salvation of thy soul is yet to be wrought out? Art thou trimming thy slimy carcase, while thy soul is dropping into Hell? What is this? but to be painting the door, when the house is on fire. It was an unseasonable time for *Belshazzar* to be feasting and quaffing, when his kingdom lay at stake, and an enemy at the gates. It would have become a wise Prince to have been rather fighting on the wall, than feasting in his palace, and fatting himself for his own slaughter, which soon befel him, Dan. v. 30. And it would become thee better to call upon thy God (poor sinner) and lie in tears for thy sins at his foot, if yet haply thy pardon may be obtained, than by wallowing in thy sensual pleasure, to stupify thy conscience, and lay it asleep, by which thou canst only gain a little ease from the troublesome thoughts of thy approaching misery.

SECT. II.

Secondly, Consider it is possible that thou, who art now without hope, may, by a timely and vigorous use of the means obtain an hope of salvation; and certainly a possible hope carries in it a force of a strong argument to endeavour for an actual hope. There is never a Devil in Hell so bad, but if he had a thousand worlds at his disposal (and every one

one better than this, we so doat on) would change them all for such a may-be, yea, count it a cheap penny-worth too. It was but a possibility which brought that *Heathen* King of *Nineveh* from his throne to lie grovelling at God's foot in sack-cloth and ashes; and that King will rise up in judgment against thee, if thou dost not more; for that was a possibility more remote than thine is; it was spelled out, not from any express promise that dropped from the preacher to encourage them to humble themselves, and turn to the Lord; for we read of nothing but desolation denounced, but from that natural *Theology* which was imprinted on their minds: This taught them to hope, that he who is the chief good, would not be implacable: But you have many express promises from God's faithful lip, that if you in his time and way seek unto him, as sure as God is now in Heaven, you shall live there with him in glory, *Their souls shall live that seek the Lord*, Psalm lxix. 32. Yea, there are millions of blessed ones now in Heaven experiencing the truth of this, who once had no more hope of Heaven than yourselves now have; and that blissful place is not yet crowded so full, but he can and will make room for you, if you have a mind to go thither. There is one prayer which Christ made on earth, that will keep Heaven's gate open for all that believe on him unto the end of the world, John xvii. 20. *Neither pray I for these, but for all those that shall believe on me through their word.* This is good news indeed: Methinks it should make your souls leap within your breasts, while you sit under the invitations of the Gospel, as the babe once did in *Elizabeth's* womb, upon the *Virgin Mary's* salutation. Say not then sinners, that ministers put you upon impossibilities, and bid you climb a hill inaccessible. No, it is the Devil, and thy own unbelieving heart, who together conspire thy ruin, that tell thee so. And as long as you listen to these counsellors, you are like to do well, are you not? Well, whatever they say, know sinner, that if at last thou missest Heaven, which God forbid, the Lord can wash his hands over your head, and clear himself of your blood: Thy damnation will be laid at thine own door; it will then appear there was no cheat in the promise, no sophistry in the Gospel. But thou didst voluntarily put eternal life from thee, and thy heart, whatever thy lying lips uttered to the contrary, *My people would have none of me*, Psalm lxxxi. 11.

So that when the Jury shall go on thy murdered soul, to enquire how thou camest to thy miserable end, thou wilt be found guilty of thy own damnation. None loseth God, but he that is willing to part with him.

Now, Thirdly, Consider the horrid cruelty of this act, by thy incorrigible and impenitent heart, to pull down eternal destruction on thy own head. O what a sad epitaph is this to be on a man's grave-stone! here lies one that cut his own throat, this the man, that would not be reclaimed! He saw Hell before him, and yet would leap into it, notwithstanding the entreaties of Christ by his spirit and ministers to the contrary! and the oftener thou hast attempted to do it, and God hath been staying thy hand by his gracious solicitations, the greater will be thy shame and confusion before God, men, and angels, at the last day. God hath set a brand upon those acts of cruelty, which a man commits upon himself, above all others. It would speak a man of a harsh currish nature, that could see his horse in his stable, or hog in his stye starve, when he hath meat to lay before him; more cruel to hear his servant roar and cry out for bread, and deny it; yet more horrid if this were done to a child or wife; but of all (because nature cries loudest for self-preservation) the greatest violence that can possibly be done to the law of nature, is to forget the duty we owe to our own life. Oh what is it then for a sinner to starve his soul by rejecting Christ the bread of life, and to let out his soul's blood at this wide sluice! this is a matchless cruelty! indeed, that which makes the self-murder of the body so great a crime, is, because it it doth so eminently hazard the destruction of the soul. Oh how unworthy then art thou to have so noble a guest as thy soul dwell in thy bosom, who preparest no better lodgings than Hell for it in another world! that soul whose nature makes it capable of being preferred to the blissful presence of God in Heaven's glory, if thou hadst not bolted the door againt thyself by thy impenitency. But, alas! this which is the worst murder is most common; they are but a few monsters, that we now and then hear of, who lay violent hands upon their bodies, at the report of which the whole country trembles; but you can hardly go into any house in which you shall not find some attempting to make away their souls; yea, that carry the very knife in their bosoms, (their beloved sins I mean) with which they stab them; even those that are full

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of natural affections to their bodies so as to be willing to spend all that they are worth, with her in the gospel, on physicians, when the life of it is in danger; yet so cruel to their dying souls, that they turn Christ, their physician, out of doors, who comes to cure them on free-cost. In a word, those that discover abundance of wisdom and discretion in ordering their worldly affairs, you would wonder how rational they are, what an account they will give why they do this, and why that, when it comes to the business of Heaven, and the salvation of their souls, they are not like the same men: So that were you to judge them only by their actings herein, you could not believe them to be men; and is it not sad, that the soul which furnisheth you with reason, for the dispatch of your worldly business, should have no benefit itself from that very reason which it lends you to do all your other business with! This, as one well saith, is as if the master of the house, who provides food for all his servants, should be himself kept by them from eating, and so remain the only starved creature in the house. And is not this the sad judgment and plague of God, that is visibly seen upon many, and those that go for wise men too. Are not their souls which give them understanding, to provide for back and belly, house and family, themselves starving in the mean time? being kept by the power of some lust from making use of their understanding and reason so far, as to put them upon any serious and vigourous endeavour for the salvation of them.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

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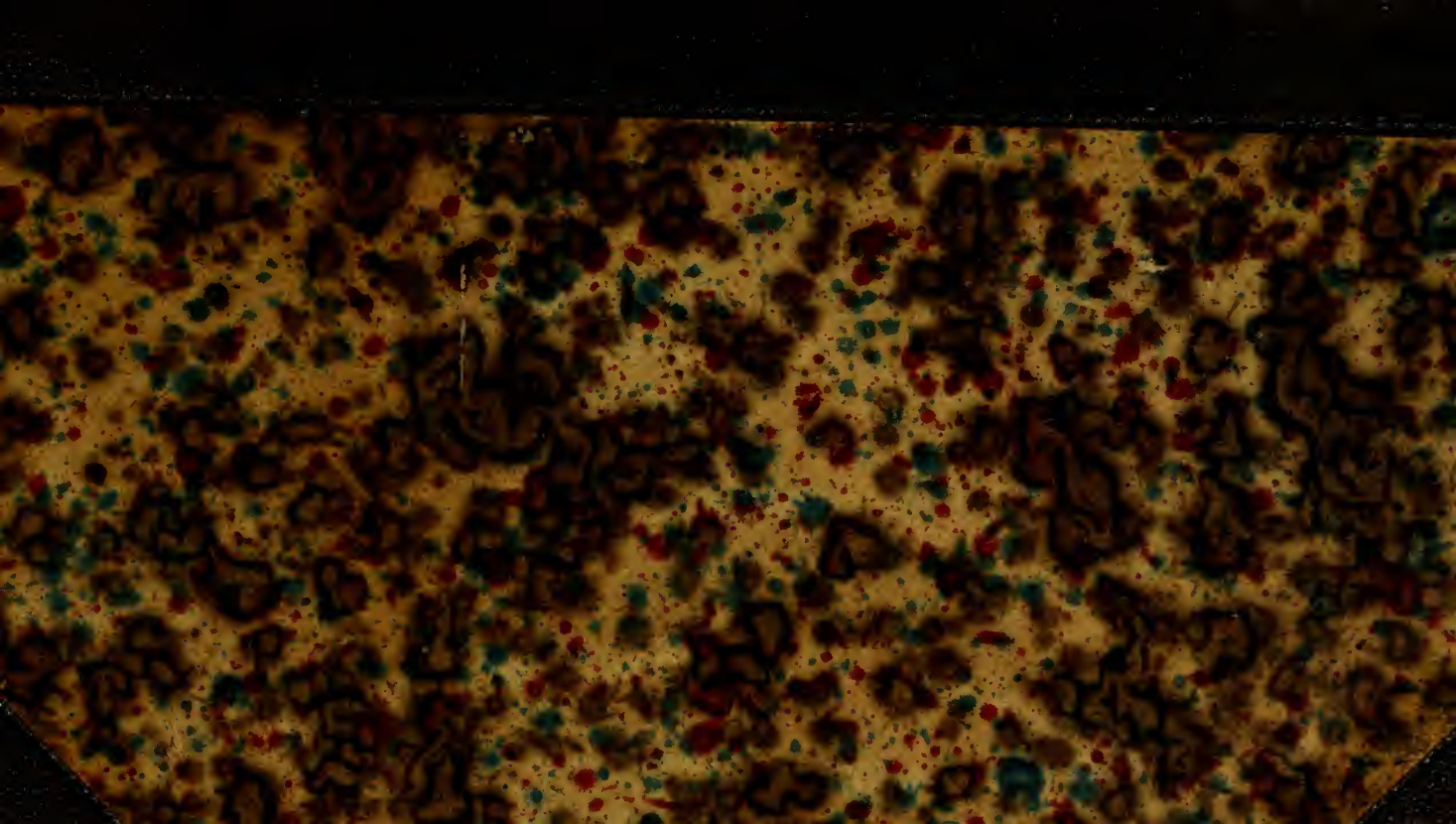
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